



DRIVEN TO BAY

BY THE AUTHOR OF
MY SISTER THE ACTRESS



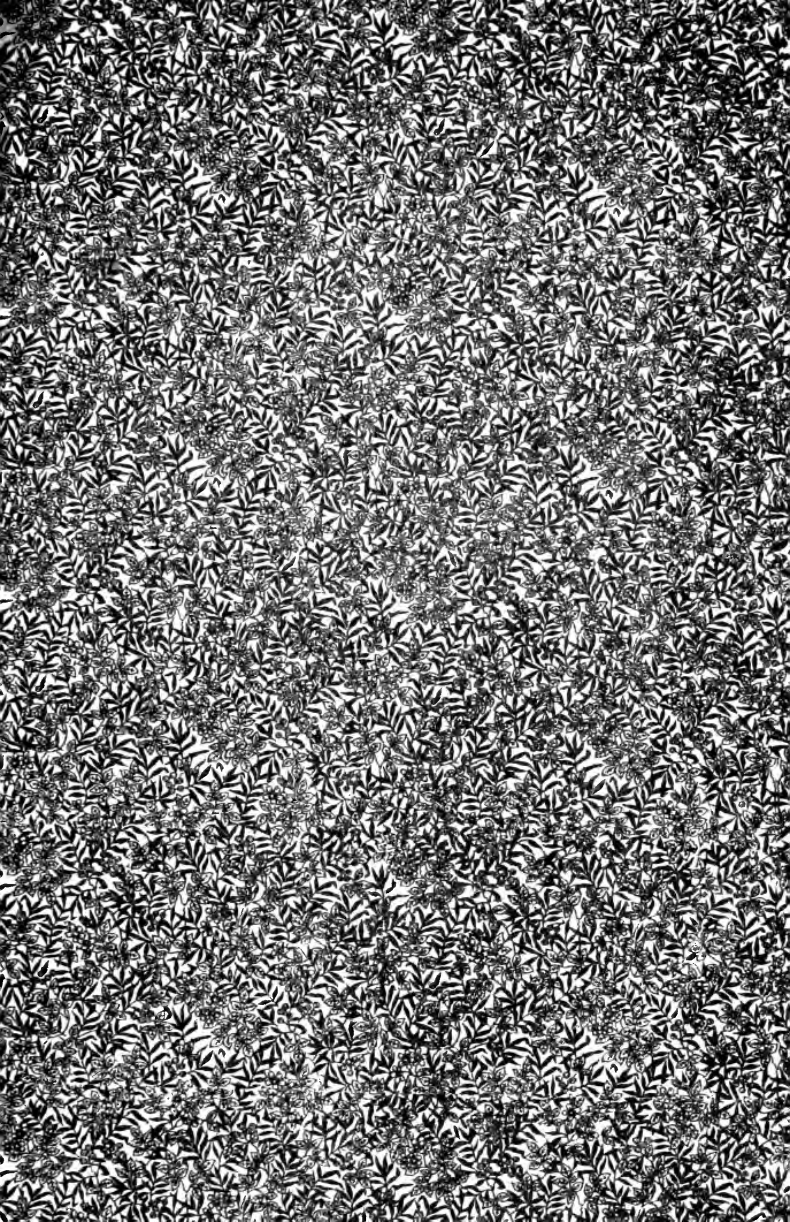


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DRIVEN TO BAY.

VOL. III.

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DRIVEN TO BAY.

A NOVEL.

BY

FLORENCE MARRYAT,

AUTHOR OF

‘LOVE’S CONFLICT,’ ‘MY OWN CHILD,’
‘THE MASTER PASSION,’ ‘SPIDERS OF SOCIETY,’
ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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DRIVEN TO BAY.





DRIVEN TO BAY.



CHAPTER I.

A PRIVATE FARCE.

MISS VERE was not only a clever woman, and a woman of the world, she was an excessively warm-hearted and generous woman,—one who, with a large mind, could take pleasure in little things, and especially if they gave pleasure to others. All this was plainly typified by the interest she took in the *Pandora's* theatricals, and the trouble she put herself to

concerning them. She gained nothing by the act. She had reaped her own laurels on the public boards, and wanted no applause from private individuals. She was busy, moreover, with study for the New Zealand tour, and had no more time than was necessary for her own work. Yet she laid it all aside to coach her fellow-passengers in their parts ; to design their dresses ; to suggest the rough scenery, and even to superintend some of the preparations. The sailors had rigged up a temporary stage in the steerage, where they had been giving some uncouth performances themselves ; and when the ladies and gentlemen proposed to act, Captain Robarts had given leave for it to be draped with the ship's flags to form a proscenium, whilst some of the men were told off to daub back canvases to serve as scenery for the different acts. It was difficult to place 'The Rivals' on such a stage with any effect, but the difficulty seemed to en-

hance the excitement attendant on the amusement; and what with the ladies' energy and Miss Vere's suggestions, the dresses promised to be marvellous, considering the drawbacks placed in their way. For a week previous to the performance, the good-natured actress had always one or more of the aspirants for histrionic honours closeted with her in her private cabin, whilst she drilled them in tone and gesture until they were perfect in their parts. And with no one had she taken more trouble than with Harold Greenwood. The poor little man had been so palpably 'sent to Coventry' by his fellow-passengers, since the fright he had given them, that his forlorn condition had excited Miss Vere's compassion, and she had shown him all the more kindness in consequence. But she little knew the damage she was doing. Ever since their first meeting, Mr Greenwood had secretly worshipped the fascinating actress. She was just the sort

of woman to attract a man of his calibre. Love invariably loves a contrast. She was big, and he was small. She was strong and energetic, and he was weak and incapable. She was full of mirth and humour, and he was romantically and sentimentally inclined. His nature unconsciously bowed before her strength and ability, and he mistook the feeling for something different; for magnetism, if it be not love itself, is quite as powerful, and more binding than the master passion. Had Mr Greenwood's fancy stopped there, it would have done no harm to anybody; but, unfortunately, he mistook Miss Vere's good-natured attempts to make him forget the *contre-temps* which every one else seemed determined he should remember, for a direct interest in his own puny little person, and plumed his feathers accordingly. His conceit and self-satisfaction became so offensively apparent, after the actress had invited him to her cabin,

and coached him there, in some unimportant part for which she had cast him, just as a salve for his wounded vanity, that Jack Blythe, whom he chose as a *confidant*, felt inclined to kick him into the sea. The subject alone would have been a source of irritation to Blythe, without the mode in which Harold Greenwood conveyed it to him. Poor Jack was not in a humour just then to receive love confidences from a successful suitor. He was suffering terribly from the disappointment he had experienced, and it took all his time to cast the devils of jealousy and envy out of him, and bring his mind forcibly to bear upon his duty. And the intense conceit of Harold Greenwood would have been sufficient to stir the wrath of a man less irritably disposed than Vernon Blythe.

‘Out of the way, there!’ he called sharply, on the morning of the theatricals, as a coil of rope came whizzing

along the deck about the legs of Mr Greenwood, causing the little man to jump a couple of feet in the air, to avoid being thrown down by it.

‘Dear me!’ he ejaculated, ‘you might have given me warning, Mr Blythe. You are all so awfully sudden in your movements on board ship, don’t you know. One never has a moment to one’s self. And it’s really most important that I should not be disturbed this morning! I’m studying my part for this evening, don’t you know? You haven’t forgotten the theatricals, eh?’

‘We can’t think of theatricals, or any other rubbish, when there’s work to be done,’ replied Jack, somewhat roughly. ‘If you want to study, you’d better go below. There’ll be more rope coming along by-and-by.’

‘No, thank you. I’m quite what Miss Vere calls “word perfect,” don’t you know? A grand woman, Miss Vere, isn’t she now? Dear creature! what

hours of happiness we have had together in her cabin, preparing for these theatricals. You'd envy me, Mr Blythe, if I told you all that has passed between us.'

'Perhaps I might. But I don't know what right you have, Mr Greenwood, to speak of any lady in such ambiguous terms. The more you have received from a woman, the less you should say.'

'Ah! but this is no secret, don't you know? Everybody will hear it soon. It will all be settled this evening.'

Jack looked at the pigmy with unfeigned surprise.

'What the d—l!' he exclaimed. 'You don't mean to tell me there's anything serious in it?'

Mr Greenwood looked quite offended.

'*Serious*, Mr Blythe. Why don't you ask me at once if I'm a man of honour, or not? Do you suppose I'd let any woman get talked about just for my own amusement? I've been brought up dif-

ferent from that, don't you know? and whatever gentlemen may be accustomed to do in the merchant service—'

'Here! just stow that about the service, will you?' interrupted Jack quickly. 'There are as good men in the merchant service as out of it, and please to remember, when you speak of it, that I'm one of them. And, at all events, we sha'n't go to *you* to teach us how to treat a woman.'

'Oh, dear! Mr Blythe, I meant no offence. I was only speaking at random, don't you know? But you seemed to think it strange I should have any intentions with respect to Miss Vere, eh? Well, of course I know I shall have trouble with my own family about it, because we've never done anything of the sort before—married an actress, don't you know? But I'm of age,' said Mr Greenwood, drawing himself up to his full height, 'and in these affairs I ask leave of no one.'

‘Except the lady, I presume,’ replied Jack dryly.

‘Except the lady, Mr Blythe, as you say. But the women—God bless them—are not hard to please.’

‘I should think not,’ said the young officer, glancing at Harold Greenwood critically; ‘and this lady, therefore, I am to presume, has already succumbed?’

‘Oh, yes,’ replied Mr Greenwood, tittering; ‘she *has* succumbed—decidedly succumbed. I had not made up my own mind concerning it until this morning, but she made up hers a fortnight ago. Oh, I’ve had plenty of encouragement, don’t you know? The only thing that has kept me back a little, is the fact of her being an actress; but I shall make it a proviso that she gives up the stage.’

‘I should think she would give up anything for *you*,’ remarked Jack ironically.

‘Well, I generally find them pretty amenable,’ returned Harold Greenwood,

with the most ineffable conceit. 'There is a little girl in England now that is most doosidly gone on me, don't you know? She would have followed me to New Zealand if I hadn't prevented her,—hid in the hold or the steerage—'pon my soul she would, only to be near me, and to see me, don't you know? They're very faithful creatures, women are, when they *really* love. Don't you think so?'

'I really cannot boast of your unlimited experience,' replied Jack. 'No one has ever hidden in the hold, or the steerage, I am afraid, just to catch a glimpse of me.'

'Really. Well, I suppose it depends very much on a fella himself, don't you know? But the women always said I had a way with me.'

'And when are you going to exercise your "way" on Miss Vere?'

'This evening. Oh, yes, it's quite settled between us that I shall speak this evening. She's expecting it, don't you

know? But we've been so busy the last fortnight studying our parts, I thought it best not to unsettle our minds by thinking of other things. But this evening it'll be all right. I suppose you'll be coming down to the theatricals, Mr Blythe, eh?'

'Oh, yes, I hope to be there.'

'Then, when they're over, I shall have the pleasure of introducing you to the future Mrs Greenwood. It'll be all settled by then, don't you know? Oh, she's a glorious creature. Such eyes—such a mouth—such splendid hair, and such a beautiful figure! I do hope my people won't make a jolly row about her being an actress. But if they do, I've made up my mind to go on the stage too, and play her lovers. I don't think I should like any other fella to play her lover. It would make me so horribly jealous, and when I'm jealous, I'm as bad as Othello, don't you know?'

'Dear me!' said Jack, 'you must be

very dangerous. I shouldn't like to be the woman you caught tripping.'

'By Jove! I'd kill her, don't you know?' replied Greenwood; 'but don't let's talk of anything so horrid. Emily — that's Miss Vere, you know—will never give me any cause for jealousy—I'm sure of that. She loves me too well. If you'd seen her this morning when we went through our scene together, you'd have been ready to die of envy.'

'Well, I congratulate you,' said Jack. 'She's a very handsome woman, and a very clever one, and a mine of gold into the bargain. If you win her, you'll be a lucky fellow. But don't count your chickens before they're hatched.'

Harold Greenwood was indignant at the suggestion.

'Don't count my chickens before they're hatched!' he repeated. 'But they *are* hatched, Mr Blythe, don't you know?'

‘All the better for you, my boy,’ laughed Jack, as he walked away.

That afternoon at dinner time Mr Coffin was on duty, and Blythe took his place at the table. As he did so, he glanced with some curiosity at the upper end, where Miss Vere, the Vansittarts, and the Leytons were all clustered about the captain. Harold Greenwood was sitting opposite the actress, devouring her with his eyes, and listening open-mouthed to every word she said. As his glance met that of Vernon Blythe, he nodded to him in a self-satisfied manner, and threw a significant look across the table, as much as to say, ‘Now, you will see, don’t you know?’ and Vernon, in consequence, kept his ears open for all that went on between them. Miss Vere appeared to be in excellent spirits, and quite looking forward to the evening’s amusement.

‘My little “Julia” here, is simply perfect,’ she said to Captain Lovell, as she laid a kindly hand on Alice Leyton’s

shoulder, 'and when you see her in her short-waisted frock, I expect you all to lose your hearts.'

'Oh, Miss Vere! how can you talk so?' exclaimed Alice. 'When I hear you speak, I shall be ashamed to open my mouth.'

'That's nonsense, dear,' replied the actress. 'If you could play as well as I do, who have been so many years on the stage, my time and labour would have been completely wasted. But you are an excellent little actress, for an amateur, and if you had had my training, you would play quite as well.'

'You say that to encourage me,' said Alice.

'And why shouldn't I encourage you? I assure you I am very proud of my "scratch" company, and feel sure we are going to have a most enjoyable evening. Mr Greenwood will distinguish himself for one, I know.'

'I shall do my best to please you, Miss

Vere, in every way, before the evening's over, don't you know?' replied Harold Greenwood, with a knowing glance, which almost amounted to a wink, at Vernon Blythe.

'That's right,' she said cheerfully. 'Captain Robarts, I hope *you* mean to honour us by your attendance?'

'Certainly, Miss Vere, unless the ship claims my attention elsewhere. But you'll have a good audience without me. Everybody is looking forward to it with the greatest expectation. The steward told me there was quite a disturbance amongst the steerage passengers when they heard that they were all invited to attend.'

'Poor dears!' sighed Miss Vere softly. 'I remember once when my husband and I were—'

But here she was interrupted by Alice Leyton.

'Miss Vere,' she exclaimed, loud enough for all the table to hear, 'do you know what you said?'

‘*What* did I say?’ asked the actress, smiling.

‘*Your husband!* Are you really married?’

At that question, the curiosity of all the passengers was aroused, and none more so than that of Vernon Blythe. The actress glanced up and down the table at the expectant faces, in amused surprise.

‘*Married!*’ she echoed, laughing merrily. ‘I thought all the world knew as much as that. Why, *of course* I’m married. Do I look like an old maid? What horrible suspicions have attached themselves to me! I’ve been married for the last ten years. I have five children,’ she added, in a faltering voice, ‘at home.’

‘*Five children!*’ repeated Alice. ‘Oh, Miss Vere, do tell me about them. What are their names, and are they boys or girls?’

‘Not now, dear,’ said her friend, as she dashed her hand across her eyes. ‘Come to my cabin to-morrow, and you shall see

all their photographs. But if I talk of them now—well, not to put too fine a point upon it, I shall begin to cry, and spoil my looks for to-night.’

‘How can you make up your mind to leave them?’ said Alice stupidly.

‘I am obliged to make up my mind to it. I leave them for their sakes as well as for my own. But my heart is very much divided, you know. It is half in England, and half in New Zealand. My husband is my business manager, and preceded me there by three months. I shall meet him when we arrive at Canterbury, and that thought is quite enough to counterbalance the pain of parting with my children.’

Poor Harold Greenwood had been fidgeting so dreadfully on his seat during this conversation, that he attracted the actress’s attention.

‘You mustn’t be offended, Mr Greenwood,’ she continued, smiling with her beautiful eyes still wet with unshed tears,

‘if I tell you that why I took a fancy to you is because there is something in your face, and the colour of your hair, that reminds me of my eldest boy. Dear little fellow! he went to school for the first time when I left England, and I thought we should both have broken our hearts. If Mr Perkins were only with me—’

‘Is Mr Perkins your husband?’ inquired Alice.

Miss Vere burst out laughing.

‘Yes, my dear! It is really true; but for Heaven’s sake don’t pursue the subject. *I am Mrs Perkins.* But I keep it a secret of blood and death. Please never call me anything but Emily Vere, or I shall not answer to the name. And now it must be time to go and see after our dresses. Mr Greenwood! didn’t I promise to be your lady’s-maid to-night? If you find any difficulty in arranging your costume, come to my cabin, and I will try and imagine you are my little boy, and play “nurse” to you—’

‘No, no, thank you!’ stammered Harold Greenwood, as he tried to make his escape from table. ‘I shall be all right, don’t you know?’

But Jack Blythe was not sufficiently magnanimous to let the humiliated wretch pass him, without standing a jest at his own expense.

‘I say, old fellow,’ he called out, as Greenwood tried to slink by his chair, ‘don’t you forget your promise to me of this morning. You’ll be sure to introduce me to the future Mrs Greenwood as soon as the theatricals are over, won’t you? For the chickens are all hatched, you know, and the business is as good as settled already.’

But the unhappy Mr Greenwood would not even attempt to say a word in his own defence. Wrenching his coat-sleeve from the grasp of Vernon Blythe, he rushed to his berth, and was seen no more till he appeared upon the stage.



CHAPTER II.

GRACE AND GODFREY.

GODFREY HARLAND and Grace Vansittart were neither of them included in the amateur company that was to perform that evening on board the *Pandora*. Parts had been allotted to both of them at first, but Miss Vansittart, who had no idea of acting, found so much difficulty in learning her lines and taking up her positions, that she had voted the whole concern a bore, and thrown up her engagement in consequence. Upon which Mr Harland had thought it politic

to follow suit. He knew that Grace would not like to sit out and watch him making mimic love to another woman, so he told her that he preferred sitting out as well ; and she was only too delighted at his apparent devotion to refuse to accept it. It was an old story between them. The woman was so deeply in love as to be blind to the arts by which the man led her to believe that he shared her feelings. And it was Godfrey Harland's policy to be more than usually attentive to Miss Vansittart at this period. He saw plainly that something had gone wrong with the older folks. They were still polite ; but all the cordiality with which they had first greeted him had died away. Mr Vansittart's manner had become distant and cool, whilst the old lady avoided him on every possible occasion. He began seriously to fear that they were only keeping up appearances until they arrived at Tabbakooloo, and that

some disagreeable surprise awaited him there. It therefore behoved him to make all the running he could with the daughter before they reached their destination, so that there might be no chance of her acquiescing in the decision of her parents, if that decision proved to be against him. He was quite unprincipled enough (as Will Farrell had suggested) to get the girl into his power, so that there should be no turning back for her.

The little stage on which the comedy was to be represented, consisted of a few planks raised in the steerage, with a row of footlights before them, which, to do honour to this grand occasion, had been surmounted above and around with the Union Jack and other flags, in the form of a proscenium. The auditorium, which was filled with chairs, benches, chests, barrels, and any other articles capable of being used as seats, was left in complete darkness, the only

light being an oil lamp hung in the entry to guide the feet of the audience. A rope tied across the upper end distinguished the 'stalls,' reserved for the saloon passengers, from the 'pit,' which was given over indiscriminately to the rest of the ship's company. All had been cordially invited to attend, and the place was crammed for some time before the hour of commencement; but Will Farrell had been before everybody else, and secured seats for Iris and Maggie and himself on the benches that stood nearest to the reserved portion of the arena. Iris had, of course, informed Maggie of the confidence that had taken place between herself and Mr Farrell, and the women were equally anxious to see what the evening would reveal to them. No one who was not expecting to see her would have recognised Iris Harland. She had pleaded an attack of toothache as an excuse for wrapping up her head in a black woollen

shawl, and had so enveloped her features that they would have scarcely been visible, even had there been light enough to distinguish them. A few minutes before the representation commenced, the captain appeared, followed by the saloon passengers, who, with a good deal of laughing and talking, took their seats, and Iris shrank back as she saw her husband conduct Miss Vansittart to the chairs just in front of her, so that there were but a couple of feet between them. He threw a careless glance behind him as he took his seat; but seeing only a couple of dowdy-looking steerage passengers, as he imagined, did not give them a second thought throughout the evening. Grace Vansittart was looking flushed and handsome, though dressed in an extravagant fashion for a performance on board ship, and Godfrey Harland was most attentive in folding her crimson shawl about her shoulders, and seeing that she had something to rest her feet upon.

‘Do keep it on, my darling,’ Iris heard him say in French, as Grace threw the wrap rather impatiently from her. ‘There is a horrid draught in this place, and you know you have a slight cold. For *my* sake keep it on.’

‘I was *sure* he’d bring her here,’ whispered Farrell to Iris. ‘All the old people, you see, get as close as they can to the stage, so that they may see and hear the better. But *his* object is neither to be seen nor heard. Can you understand the lingo they’re talking, Miss Douglas?’

Iris nodded her head.

‘Oh! well, then, it’s all right. But I was afraid he was going to trick us. He is a deep ‘un, and no mistake.’

‘Hush, Will,’ said Maggie, ‘the play’s going to begin.’

At that juncture all eyes turned to the stage, and divers were the opinions as to whether Miss Vere’s short-waisted dress of sunflower hue, tied with a sash under her arms, or Miss Leyton’s soft white

muslin, became her best. The acting went smoothly, and the majority of the audience were intensely interested in the comedy and its exponents. But for some there, a more thrilling drama, the incidents of which were interwoven with their very lives, was being enacted in the auditorium.

Will Farrell had no personal interest in Godfrey Harland's infidelity to his wife, but he hated the man as he hated hell, and longed to see him exposed on every point. Maggie, too, had her reasons for wishing to be revenged on him; and Iris felt intuitively that in some unknown way the happiness or misery of her whole future life lay in the discovery of that evening. As she listened to her husband's conversation with Miss Vansittart, she was convinced of one thing—that she loved him no longer. Not a particle of jealousy or regret assailed her as she heard him pouring his tale of love into another woman's ear. All she

felt was an intense surprise that she should ever have believed in, or fancied she cared for, him. He seemed to appear before her for the first time in his true colours. Had she seen him long ago, she thought, as she did then, she never could have married him.

And while Iris thought thus, another face rose up before her—the pleading, earnest eyes of Vernon Blythe gazed into hers, and she felt the tears of regret rise to dim her sight. But she brushed them hurriedly away. She would not have had Farrell and Maggie think she was weeping at what she saw before her, for all the world. Besides, she wanted to keep her mind clear, in order not to lose a word of what was passing between her husband and Miss Vansittart. And as she listened she knew that all that had been told her was true, and Godfrey designed to ruin another life as he had done hers.

‘In a few more weeks,’ he whispered,

when the curtain, amidst much applause, had descended on the first act of the 'Rivals,' 'we shall be in New Zealand, Grace. Shall you be glad or sorry when our voyage is at an end?'

He still spoke in French, which he had acquired fluently whilst knocking about in the Southern States of America, and Grace, fresh from her boarding-school, retained sufficient knowledge of the language to understand and answer him.

'Why should I be sorry?' she replied to his question. 'We shall be as much together then as we are now, shall we not?'

'Ah, that is the doubt that worries me,' said Harland; 'will your parents permit a free intercourse between us? You know how few opportunities for meeting occur on land to what they do on board ship; and unless I am received as your accepted suitor—'

'But you *must* be received as my

accepted suitor! I will have no one else,' interrupted Grace determinately.

'My dearest, if it depended only on *you*, I know what my happy fate would be. But it is this horrid £ s. d., Grace! I am so poor. Your father is certain to look for money, in exchange for his daughter's hand.'

'Well, I don't know that, Godfrey! Papa has often told me he is rich enough to be able to afford to let me choose for myself. And I *have* chosen! If he doesn't like it, it can't be helped! But I have chosen *you*.'

'My sweet girl! You will not be persuaded to give me up, then, Grace?'

'Not for worlds! How *could* I?'

'But if, on arriving at Tabbakooloo, your father should absolutely refuse to consent to our engagement, what then?'

'I shall marry you without his consent! Godfrey, you *will* marry me?' she added, with a quick look of alarm.

He laid his hand on hers, with a soothing gesture.

‘Do you doubt me, my darling? Have we not sworn to belong to each other? If you are determined to stick to me, through thick and thin, I want nothing more—’

She turned her head towards him then, and whispered in his ear, and Iris could just see the glistening tear in her eye, as one of the lights fell across her face.

‘I understand,’ he answered, ‘and your assurance was all I needed to make me perfectly happy. It is an agreement, then? Whatever any one may say or think, you are to be my wife as soon as I can make you so?’

‘Whenever you like,’ she said, slipping her hand into his under cover of her shawl.

They spoke without reserve, because they quite believed that it was safe to do so. The rest of the saloon passengers were well in front of them. As to the

inmates of the second cabin and steerage, who sat behind, they did not suppose for a moment that any of them could understand, even if they overheard, their words. How little they imagined *who* sat just behind them.

‘Godfrey,’ said Grace, after a pause, ‘I cannot believe I am really the first girl to whom you have said such sweet things ! Tell me the truth now. Have you often been in love before ?’

‘*Never !* That is, *really* in love, Grace. I have had my flirtations and *amourettes*—what man of my age has not ?—but I never felt what it was to be *in earnest* until now.’

‘Have you never thought of marrying any other woman ?’

At this point-blank question, Iris could see, even through the gloom, that Godfrey winced.

‘Now, don’t call me to book for my thoughts, you little tyrant !’ he answered, with affected gaiety. ‘The fact remains

that—that—I am going to marry *you*. Is not that sufficient ?’

‘Yes, more than sufficient. It makes me so happy,’ said the girl earnestly, ‘to think that I shall belong to you only, and that you will belong only to me! The world will seem like fairyland when we share it together.’

‘Still, my darling, the truth remains that, since they have seen that we love each other, your parents have not been so cordial to me as they were. You never hear your father ask me to take a hand at whist in the evenings now; and as for your mother, she scuttles out of the way whenever she sees me coming. It makes things very unpleasant for me, especially as I am in Mr Vansittart’s employment. Has he ever warned you against me ?’

‘Never mind,’ replied Grace soothingly; ‘it can make no difference to us if he *has*. We are going to marry each other, whatever they may say; and when it is once over, they will not hold out long against

their only child. Why, who have they but me? It will all come right, Godfrey, never fear. And, meanwhile, we love each other, and nothing on earth can alter that.'

As Iris listened to the words of this girl, whom love, however misdirected, was transforming from a pert boarding-school miss to a thoughtful woman, the tears ran down her cheeks with pity and compassion. It was terrible to her to sit there, the lawful wife of Godfrey Harland, and hear another woman express her implicit faith and trust in him; whilst she knew that, before long, she herself must inevitably be the instrument to open that woman's eyes, and expose the treachery and falsehood of which she had been made the victim. The idea turned Iris sick and faint, and she rose from her seat with the intention of leaving the theatre.

'What is the matter?' asked Farrell; 'are you ill?'

‘Yes,’ she whispered back to him ;
‘I have heard enough! Let me go to my berth.’

They both wanted to accompany her, but she over-ruled their request, and begged them not to make a commotion that might attract attention to their party. So they let her have her own way, and as soon as she could do so without disturbing the audience, she crept away. She was trembling all over, however, as she did so ; and when she reached the entrance of the auditorium, and felt the fresh air blowing on her face, she leant against the side for a moment to recover herself, and pulled the wrap off her face.

‘Are you not well?’ said a voice by her side.

She looked up and encountered Vernon Blythe. The sight of him set her tears flowing in earnest.

‘Oh, yes! thank you. Only the place is too hot for me, and I am going on deck instead.’

‘Let me go with you.’

‘No! no! Why should I take you away from your amusement? I am perfectly well able to go by myself.’

‘Have I made you afraid of me, Iris?’ he asked gently. ‘You need not be. You must know that if I offended you, it was done in ignorance of your position, and I shall never repeat it. Show me that I am forgiven by letting me attend you now.’

‘There is nothing to forgive,’ she faltered, placing her hand upon his for a moment; ‘and I was only sorry that circumstances had misled you. But why have you never spoken to me since? Am I to lose your friendship as well as—as—everything?’

‘I have been too unhappy to be able to trust myself to speak to you,’ said Vernon frankly, as he led her on to the quarter-deck. ‘The shock of your intelligence was greater to me than you may think. I had been living on my

hope ever since I met you again, and believed you to be free, and when you dashed it from me, it knocked me over—that's all. Don't be angry with me. A woman can't understand a man's feelings in such matters. We can't drink milk after brandy. And so I have kept out of your sight, that I might dream of you as little as possible. And I didn't think that you would miss me.'

'Oh, yes, I have,' replied Iris simply. 'All my pleasure seemed gone with you. Perhaps, as you say, I cannot enter into your feelings; but I think I would rather have "milk" than nothing at all.'

'Let us have some "milk" now, then,' replied Jack, almost cheerfully, as he placed her under the shelter of the long-boat, and established himself by her side. 'Let us be friends, since we can be nothing more. And now, what is the fresh trouble, for I can see there is something fresh by your face? Treat me like a friend, and tell me everything.'

‘Yes! indeed I will,’ said Iris, ‘for I feel that it will be a great comfort, and perhaps a help to me. I will tell you everything, and you shall advise me what is best to be done. And in the first place, Mr Blythe—’

‘That’s a bad beginning,’ interrupted Jack, ‘for in the first place, you must not call me “*Mr Blythe*.”’

‘What am I to call you then?’

‘What *used* you to call me when we walked and talked together at Dunmow?’

‘Ah! that was such a long time ago, and you were such a boy!’

‘Well, some people say I’m not much more than a boy now, and, at all events, it is not so long ago as to be forgotten. I think you used to call me “Vernie” then. Won’t you call me by that name now?’

‘If it will please you—’ commenced Iris hesitatingly.

‘It will give me about as much pleasure as I am capable of, Iris. If I may

not be your lover, let me fancy myself your friend.'

'There is no fancy about *that*,' she answered warmly; 'and I will call you whatever you like. Come nearer to me then, Vernie, and let me tell you all.'





CHAPTER III.

IRIS AND VERNON.

HE drew nearer to her, on that invitation, and took her hand in his. Iris trembled slightly, but she did not withdraw it.

‘The worst thing I have to accuse myself of, with regard to you, Vernie, is that I deceived you on our first meeting, by letting you believe I was a widow. But I was frightened into the deception. I did not know what else to say. You asked me why I was masquerading on board the *Pandora* under the name of Douglas, and it was impossible for me

to tell you *then*. Now, things have gone so far, that I feel I must confide in some one, and I know you will respect my confidence.'

'I will respect as much as I shall value it, Iris. But tell me all that has happened to you since we parted. You can't think how ignorant I am. After that never-to-be-forgotten day, when I rushed half mad from your presence—but there, we won't say another word about *my* troubles—but since that time I have never heard anything of you except the bare fact of your marriage. I do not even know your husband's name, unless it is Douglas. I don't know where you have been living, or if you have been happy or miserable. Tell me your whole story—that is, if it will not give you pain.'

'I mean to tell it you, Vernie. I wish you to hear it. Until you do, you cannot give me the counsel of which I stand so much in need. You know that

when we met, I was already engaged to be married. My poor old father, who was very weak and easily taken in, had made the acquaintance of a good-looking young Englishman, fresh home from America, who seemed to have plenty of money, and to have been everywhere, and seen everything,—a man with a pleasant, free manner and a glib tongue, and no objection to tell an untruth, though, of course, I didn't know that at the time. Well, he brought him to our house, and he fell in love with me, and—and—'

'And you fell in love with him, Iris.'

'I suppose I did.'

'Why do you say "*suppose*"?'

'Because I have my doubts now as to whether I ever *did* love him. However, I was only eighteen, and I thought I did. He seemed everything that was delightful to me, and *you* looked such a boy by his side.'

'Ah! poor me. Leave *me* out of the story altogether.'

‘No ; I don’t want to do so. I am proud to remember that you cared for me, and feel honoured by your preference, and still more, Vernie, that it should have lasted all this time.’

He squeezed her hand, but made no answer.

‘Well, we were married not two months after I had sent you away, and he took me to Liverpool.’

‘What *was* his name, Iris?’

‘Wait a minute, and I will tell you. I was too young at first to understand what the mode of my husband’s life could mean. I thought it very strange that it altered so constantly ; that sometimes we lived in big hotels, and sometimes in squalid lodgings ; that at one time he would appear to have his pockets full of money, and at others we had nothing but bread and cheese to eat, and creditors were clamouring all day to have their bills paid. My husband, too, spent all his evenings and most of his nights away,

and I was very friendless and solitary in consequence. One thing I did very soon understand, and that was, that he was addicted to intemperance. He was seldom quite sober, and his violence when intoxicated kept me in constant dread of him.'

'My poor darling,' cried Jack impetuously, and then correcting himself, 'I beg your pardon, Iris,' he continued; 'but why didn't you go back to your father?'

'Oh, Vernie, how could I? Don't you remember how poor my father, Captain Hetherley, was? He had nothing but his half-pay to live on, and he was getting old, and needed a few comforts. How could I have thrown myself on him for support? Besides, he died in the first year of my marriage. His home could not have provided me with shelter for long.'

'Well, dear, go on. What next?'

'There were other things for me to bear beside the shame of debt, and the fear of my husband's cruelty. I discovered, only too soon, that his love for me had been

but a passing fancy, and that his fancy altered like the wind. Had I cared for him, I might have broken my heart from jealousy of others.'

'Oh, Iris. What man could have the baseness to treat you in such a manner. *You*, who had been so delicately nurtured and trained, and so much indulged. Why *I* could have given you a happier and more respectable lot than this.'

'I have often thought so too,' she whispered.

'Have you really?' exclaimed Vernon joyfully. 'Is it possible that in the midst of so much misery you had time to think of *me*?'

'Oh, often, often. When I have been most unhappy and most disappointed, the remembrance of you has come back to me most clearly, and I have longed to be able to tell you that I was sorry I had caused you so much pain.'

'Never mind, my dearest. You are making it up to me now a thousand

fold. Let me hear the rest of your story.'

'It was not long before my husband took me away from Liverpool, and then we lived in all sorts of places, but it was always the same life of solitude and discomfort for me, until Maggie came to live with us, and be my friend. He never dared to treat me so unkindly after she came. She seemed to hold some sort of power over him—in fact, I often thought he was half afraid of her. Well, this went on until about a year ago, when we came to live in London. And there I found out that my husband made his money entirely by gambling. He hadn't a penny of his own, and he was constantly getting into scrapes, and having to run away and keep in hiding for weeks together, and Maggie and I used nearly to starve whilst he was gone. But he made some rich friends in London nevertheless, during some of his lucky moments, and spent half his time with them. And one day he told me he

should be obliged to run over to France for a few weeks, as his creditors were pressing him very hard, and I believed him, until I picked up a letter he left behind him by accident, and found that he had accepted an appointment in New Zealand instead, and was going out in this very ship.'

'In the *Pandora*!' exclaimed Jack. 'You don't mean to tell me your husband is on board this vessel?'

'I do mean to tell you so. I am the wife of Godfrey Harland.'

'*Of Mr Harland.* Good heavens!' said Jack; 'but, Iris—'

'Don't interrupt me, Vernie. I have nearly reached the end of my story. You can understand now why Maggie and I are here, hiding in the second cabin. Mr Harland intended to leave us in England to beg—to steal—or to starve. He knew we had no other means of subsistence. But I determined to circumvent him. If he was to draw a good

salary as Mr Vansittart's agent, I did not see why he should not support me as I have a right to be supported. So Maggie and I sold all our little belongings, and came after him, with the intention of not revealing our identity until we landed in New Zealand. But now I hardly know what to do.'

'You are *Godfrey Harland's wife*?' mused Vernon Blythe. 'It seems incredible to me. And yet how intuitively that man and I have disliked each other from the moment we met. But, Iris, do you know that he is passing himself off as an unmarried man, and that all the ship says he is engaged to Miss Vansittart?'

'I know more, Vernie. I sat just behind them this evening at the theatricals, and heard their conversation. They spoke in French, and thought, therefore, they could do so unreservedly. She considers herself undoubtedly engaged to him. They discussed their marriage prospects

together, and agreed that if, on landing. Mr and Mrs Vansittart refused their consent, they were to be married at once without waiting for it. And now I have told you all this, that you may be able to advise me. What ought I to do? What is my duty to do in this matter?’

‘To stop it at once, Iris. What has this poor girl Miss Vansittart been guilty of that you should let her suffer one jot more than is necessary? Were I you, I should go this evening to Mr Vansittart, and tell him the whole story.’

‘Oh, no,’ replied Iris, shrinking from the idea; ‘not till I have spoken to Godfrey, Vernie, and given him the opportunity to return to his duty. Would it not seem like malice, or jealousy, to go to the Vansittarts first? They don’t like him, you know, and they look coldly on his attentions to their daughter—Miss Vansittart acknowledged as much to-night—and so they would not blame him for

withdrawing from them. And with her, of course, he must make his own peace.'

'And what is to follow the disclosure of your proximity?' demanded Jack, somewhat sarcastically. 'Tears, kisses, repentance, forgiveness, blue-fire, and general rejoicings.'

Iris was silent.

'Tell me, Iris, are you going to tumble into your husband's arms as soon as you meet him, and take him back again if he promises to be a good boy and never do it again?'

'You don't *know* me,' was all she answered.

'I know what women are, as a rule, stupid, soft-hearted creatures, that believe every word that is said to them, and are always ready to think themselves in the wrong.'

'Up to a certain point, Vernie, perhaps we do. But there comes a day for most of us, when we feel that we can forgive no longer. And I have reached that day

and passed it. Were I of a revengeful nature, I should think there was no motive but revenge in what I am going to do now.'

'It would be a solemn duty left undone were you to ignore it, Iris. Whatever might happen to that poor girl hereafter, would lie at your door. Were I to follow my own wishes, I should say,—let the brute commit bigamy, and free yourself from him. Why should you be linked all your life to a man who is less than a husband to you? It is not *he* who deserves our pity. But for the woman who is innocently walking into the trap he has laid for her, we cannot feel too much. I think you should inform the Vansittarts, and deprive Harland of the appointment they have promised him, at once. Why should such a scoundrel be placed in a position of trust and emolument?'

Iris's hazel eyes dilated with horror.

'But, Vernon, you don't know him.

What should *I* do under such circumstances—left at his mercy in a strange land? Why, he would *kill* me, in revenge for his loss. Oh, no; *I dare not!* I shall not even threaten him with the disclosure that I am his wife. I don't want to live with him again. I detest the thought of it. All I meant to tell him was that I am here, and as long as he sends me enough money to live on, I promise to remain quiet.'

'But, Iris, that looks like collusion to me. Under such circumstances, you will leave him free to work what villainy he chooses, so long as you get your remittances. Is that just?'

The girl bent her head upon her knees and rocked herself backwards and forwards, moaning.

'Oh, dearest, don't do that!' cried Vernon; 'you distress me beyond measure. Is it possible this brute inspires you with so much fear?'

'*Fear!*' she repeated, with a shudder,

‘I am so much afraid of him that I feel, when the moment comes, I shall be too cowardly to speak at all! Oh, Vernie! let him go on. What does it signify to me? Miss Vansittart is as well able to take care of herself as I was; and if she suffers—well, we *all* suffer! I think we are born for nothing else. But I *cannot* go back to him. I would rather throw myself overboard at once!’

‘Iris,’ said Vernon, and his voice shook audibly as he spoke, ‘don’t be angry with me for what I am going to say. I should not have dared to speak my mind, had not your distress emboldened me. But—if I am not utterly distasteful to you, darling—let me save you from all this misery. Let me take you away from it! You shall never say then that you need love or protection. My heart has been yours since we first met, and my arm shall be at your service till death parts us! Will you come, Iris? will you be *my* wife—in deed if not in

name—and let me try and make up to you for the wretched failure of your married life?’

She looked up into his brave, kind young face with surprise, but without any horror.

‘Oh, how *good* you are!’ she exclaimed gratefully; ‘and how you must love me to make such a proposal. To offer to cloud all your life and prospects with the burden of a disappointed and broken-hearted woman,—a woman who would bring shame on your name and your mother’s, and be but a sorry pleasure to you after all, so that you may patch up her ruined life, and make her feel at ease once more. Do you think I would accept your offer, Vernie?—that I would be so selfish as to do it? Some women might forget to be grateful, in prating to you of the wrong of such an action. But I can’t. I can only see the love that prompted it, and thank you from the bottom of my heart. But I

don't mean to avail myself of it all the same.'

'You could never be a burden to me, Iris,' he answered simply; 'for I have loved you so long. And as for my mother—you don't know what a good, generous, warm-hearted creature she is. She would brave anything for the sake of the woman who loved *me*.'

'But I have never said I loved you,' returned Iris, with a faint smile.

'Will you say it now? It would make me so very happy! Will you say that—if you were free—you would be my wife?'

'Oh, yes! yes! A thousand times over!' she answered, weeping. '*I do love you, Vernie*; I love you as much as you love me. But don't talk of it; it will never, *never* be! Such things don't happen in this world. I have forged my own chains, and I must wear them, however hardly they may press upon me; but I shall never forget what you have said to me to-night,

and the remembrance will make me happier to the last day of my life.'

'Then I won't wish my words unsaid, Iris. But with respect to Harland, what do you intend to do?'

'I will think it over to-night. I have resolved to speak to him. The only thing is, how shall I do it? Perhaps I will write a letter, and you shall give it to him. I would not like to trust *anybody*; or, as he has a deck cabin to himself, I may go and speak to him after he has retired for the night. It little matters *how* it is done, but it *will* be done before this time to-morrow.'

'That is a brave girl,' said Blythe, 'and, remember, there is no cause for fear. I am here to protect you, dearest, and not a hair of your head shall be harmed on land or at sea, so long as I stand by to prevent it!'

'You make me feel so safe,' replied Iris, with a grateful sigh. 'I will go below now, Vernie, and dream that I have one friend left to defend me against my enemy.'



CHAPTER IV.

THE HOUSE AMIDSHIPS.

THE next morning the weather was damp and squally, the air close and depressing. There was a faint breeze from the westward, but the clouds, which at times obscured the sun and poured down torrents of cold rain, were making a northerly course.

The day was by no means an enjoyable one, and the spirits of the passengers—which were suffering a reaction after the excitement attendant on the theatricals—would have fallen considerably with the state of the atmosphere, had they not been

kept up by the welcome news, that should the vessel be lucky enough to get a fair wind, they would actually sight land in less than a week. In a week's time, perhaps, they would step ashore, and those fond meetings, of which they had dreamt throughout the voyage, would be realised. Under such thoughts and anticipations, they were mostly flurried and restless, given to talking excitedly and laughing at untoward moments, and appearing on deck after every squall to look out for the longed-for gale that should blow them to their destination, only, however, to be driven below again by a remorseless storm that enveloped the *Pandora* in a drenching shower.

There was one portion of the vessel which played an important part upon the voyage, but has not yet been mentioned. This was the forward house amidships. There were two houses built upon the maindeck, one abaft the mainmast on the quarter-deck, the other abaft the foremast.

The former was the smoke-room, the latter was divided into five separate sections, and to make their respective positions clear, it is necessary to give a full description of them.

In the after-part of the house amidships, on the morning in question, Billy Banks, the West Indian cook, was busily employed in peeling potatoes. Seated on a kid in solemn majesty, with his rolled-up sleeves displaying two coal-black arms, he disengaged the spuds from their jackets, and tossed them into a bucket of water to rinse, previous to putting them in the copper. Occasionally he would turn towards the stove, and lift the cover of a saucepan, lest the contents should boil over; and the sailors came and went meanwhile, but Billy never answered their coarse jests except by a movement of the head.

The after-door, which faced the main-hatch, was partly hidden by the donkey winch, and under this convenient shelter,

Billy, surrounded by his pots and pans, was able to roast and boil at his ease.

Now and then a lazy shellback would stretch himself out before the galley fire, and spin him a long yarn, and Billy would reward him for his trouble with a savoury 'flap-jacks' (the sailor's name for a pancake), or the remains of a dish that had left the saloon table; for the black cook seldom left the galley, and the steward, whose business it was to look after him, always found him at his post. In truth, Billy had nowhere else to go. He disliked the rough horse-play of the seamen, and could not stand 'chaff' well enough to associate happily with them; the carpenter and boatswain seldom invited him to their berths, and his own was far from agreeable, even to a black man's nostrils. It was situated on the right side of the house, built fore and aft, and was certified to hold four men, therefore he had ample room. But the odour pervading the place was more

than any one could be expected to endure. In the top bunk Billy slept. His bedding consisted of an old straw mattress and pillow, two red blankets, and a stained and faded monkey jacket, which he used as a coverlet. Across the room, suspended on a line, hung sundry dilapidated and discoloured articles of linen, supposed to be clean; and in the corner, lashed to the deck, was a sea-chest, adorned with the brightest colours, like a Runcorn flat.

In the lower bunks, tin pannikins, new brooms, chopping-boards, and kids were securely stowed, so that the rolling of the vessel might not set them clattering against each other; and in the after corner four mysterious casks were made fast to the stanchions. These casks contained 'slush,' which is always recognised as part of the cook's perquisites at sea. And Billy, who was either too lazy or too frightened to stow it, like a rational being, in the forepeak, kept the unsa-

voury, nauseous matter in his berth. Few, perhaps, may, luckily for themselves, be acquainted with the stuff. It is the skimming of all the greasy liquids, the odds and ends which may be left upon the dinner plates, the scrapings of the frying-pans, the searchings of the 'kids'—in fact, every conceivable kind of oily substance which may fall into the cook's hands, and which is carefully collected and stowed away, to be sold on landing at a high price for the manufacture of different kinds of machinery oil.

When the 'menavellins' have been kept for a month, the sickly stench from their decomposition may be well imagined, and no living creature but a negro could have slept in the foetid air which exhaled from them. It is very certain that coloured noses can stand much more than white ones. It only needs the introduction of an European to Cow Yard, which is the 'nigger' locality of Port of Spain, or to the back slums of China Chowk, Cal-

cutta, or to Twenty-Seventh Street, in Rangoon, to demonstrate the truth of the assertion. The cleansing of the mythical Augean stables would be a simple task compared to the purification of any one of the above-mentioned localities. In such squalid filth and rank odours can both the East and West Indians live and thrive.

But enough of Billy Banks. On the other side there slept, in a berth of the same dimensions, two more wholesome personages — Alexander M'Donald, the carpenter, commonly called 'Chips,' and William Hanlin, boatswain. Their little domicile was ship-shape, and displayed an air of comfort. The upper bunks were used for sleeping berths, and the lower served as lockers for different stores.

Iron bolts, nuts, sheaves, and screws were kept in different compartments, besides spun yarn, mallets, small blocks, and marlinspikes.

There were three sea-chests that were

used as seats, and a small table (that could be shipped for meals, and lowered when room was required) was hinged to the bulkhead.

Under the swinging lamp above the table a neat pipe rack, filled with 'clays,' had been fixed by the carpenter, and his shipmate had added to their homely comforts by making a fancy lashing for the water-beaker, which was resting on chocks at the further end.

As for their beds, a patchwork quilt, like Joseph's coat of many colours—a parting present from his wife—distinguished Hanlin's resting-place from that of 'Chips,' which was covered by a traveling rug, representing a furious orange and red tiger, in the act of springing on a defenceless green and yellow woman, cowering under a blue and purple garment.

The boatswain, like his commanding officer, was a man of few words. His voice was gruff, and his hard life had

made him reserved and unpolished, but he was good hearted, and often passed over the faults that came under his notice. The men in his watch were engaged upon various duties that did not require his supervision, so, after satisfying himself that they were steadily at work, and the mate was nowhere in sight, he stepped over the weatherboard of his berth, and lighting a pipe, sat down to refresh himself with a few unlicensed puffs.

Shortly afterwards he was joined by 'Chips,' who entered ostensibly to fetch, a new cold chisel, but when he discovered that his friend was drawing the calumet of peace, he chopped up a pipeful of plug, which he produced from under his mattress, and came to an anchor by his side.

The carpenter (as his name denoted) hailed from Scotland, and was a loquacious fellow, often amusing himself whilst at work by singing snatches of his favourite Burns, extoling the virtues and beauties of his native land.

‘Dirty weather!’ he remarked, as he took his seat beside Hanlin.

‘We shall get a spell of this wind in the wrong quarter, if I’m not mistook,’ said the boatswain, with an ominous ‘*Humph*,’ as he filled the berth with clouds of smoke, sucking at his pipe as if he had not enjoyed such a treat for weeks past.

‘Ay, ay, laddie; but it’s unsteady,’ replied Chips, ‘and maybe it will shift round to the right quarter before midnight. Them lassies aft are near piping their eyes because she’s made so little headway, but they’ll see their men before a week’s over their heads for all that.’

‘What’s for dinner?’ demanded the unsentimental boatswain.

‘Peasoup and pork,’ replied ‘Chips.’ ‘I can eat the salt meat this weather; it gives me a twist; but I shall be glad when we gets alongside the New Zealand mutton—not the tinned stuff, you ken, but the real article.’

‘Hand me a pannikin,’ said the boatswain, who detected the approach of the first officer, and stooping down, he drew a mug of water, and drank it off. Then, without a look at his colleague, he put the pannikin in the lower bunk, and stepped out upon the deck.

‘Look here, boatswain,’ said Mr Coffin, ‘send a couple of hands up to shift that royal; and, carpenter,’ he continued to M‘Donald, ‘I want you to see about the steps of that side ladder’; and with an ‘Ay, ay, sir,’ the petty officers prepared to carry out his orders.

Between the two berths was a large air-shaft which was used as a ventilator to the ’tween decks, and separated the cosy little place just described, and which was pervaded by a healthy smell of Stockholm tar, from the inodorous hovel of Billy Banks.

The fifth division of the house formed a room which was called the spare galley. An iron partition alone separated it from

the kitchen, which rendered it so hot that it would have been impossible for any one to live, or sleep there; and as it was considered a dangerous locker in which to keep the spare suit of sails, it was thrown open for the public use. It was but a small compartment, built athwart-ships, with a teak-wood door, and dead-lights at either side.

The jolly-boats were kept, bottoms upward, on the skids which rested upon the house, and served as shelter from the squalls, and a welcome haven for the sailors on watch on rainy nights.

During the morning in question, a purple curtain rose and shut out the faint gleam of the sun, and then burst suddenly upon the *Pandora* in a pitiless storm of rain, mingled with large hail-stones.

Iris Harland, who had been walking up and down the deck, trying in vain to decide how she should disclose her identity to her husband, without encountering

danger from the vials of his wrath, was caught by the shower, and obliged to run for shelter under the boats until the violence of the gale should have somewhat passed over.

‘Look ’ere, missy, step inside there,’ said one of the sailors, opening the door of the spare galley; ‘it’ll be nice and warm for ye.’

‘Thank you,’ replied Iris, whose slight clothing was already wet through; and as she took advantage of his offer, the sailor (whose watch below it was) firmly closed the weather door, leaving the one to leeward open.

‘Ye’ll soon be ashore now, missy,’ he said, wishing to open a conversation; ‘we’re a’most there by this time.’

‘Yes; I’m very glad,’ replied Iris vaguely, looking dreamily before her; ‘we have had a capital voyage, have we not?’

‘Nought to growl on,’ answered the man; ‘fine weather—a good ship—no

deaths—and a doctor ready to give us a clean bill of health. I 'spose now, missy, as you're goin' out to meet your friends,—your sweetheart, may be—if I may make so bold. Ah, it won't be long before *you'll* get a husband, *I* know.'

But Iris did not answer him. Her frame was trembling like an aspen leaf—her cheeks were blanched—her breath had almost stopped. For another passenger had rushed suddenly in to take refuge from the storm, and stood beside her, and that other was Godfrey Harland, her husband. The moment for discovery had come, and notwithstanding all the encouragement that Vernon Blythe had tried to give her, Iris felt like a criminal tied to the stake.

'You are not well, missy,' said the sailor, noticing her perturbation; 'shall I fetch you some water?'

She motioned him away with her

hand, afraid to trust herself to speak, and Harland's attention was attracted by her very silence.

'Can *I* be of any assistance?' he asked, coming forward; and in her desperation Iris pulled her hood off her face, and turned to confront him. She never thought of the sailor's presence, or that it would be better to delay speaking to Godfrey until they should be alone together. She was like a patient, forced sooner or later to undergo a cruel operation, who puts it off and off, until at some critical moment he rushes blindly at his fences, lest his courage should again fail him by delay. As Harland caught sight of her face, he staggered backwards.

'Good God!' he exclaimed; '*you* here? What farce is this, and why have I been kept in the dark all this while?'

'Yes,' Iris answered slowly, but with teeth that chattered with apprehension,

'*I* am here, *I*, *your wife*. And by what right do you claim to have been told *where* I was, or for what purpose?'





CHAPTER V.

FACE TO FACE.

AT this juncture the sailor, seeing breakers ahead, began to feel awkward, which he evinced by passing his cap from one hand to the other, and shuffling his feet about.

‘Well, missy, as ye’re better now,’ he said, breaking in upon their conference, ‘I think I’ll make bold to leave ye. Good-morning.’

‘No, no!’ cried Iris, with quick alarm, ‘don’t go.’ And then, ashamed of the inference of her words, she added,—‘Oh, yes! of course, you have your work to

do. I am all right, thank you, and I will stay with—with—this *gentleman*.'

She spoke with so bitter a sarcasm, that as soon as the sailor had departed, Godfrey Harland seized her arm.

'Good heavens!' he exclaimed, 'what do you mean by speaking like that? Do you want the whole ship to guess our history?'

Iris shook off his grasp as though he had been a viper.

'Don't dare to touch me,' she said defiantly, or the whole ship *shall* hear our history. '*You* know which of us would suffer most in that case. And don't imagine I am friendless here. Heaven has sent protectors to me in my need. I have but to raise my voice, to be defended against your violence.'

'Another lover, I presume. Who is the happy man?' asked Harland sarcastically.

Iris's cheeks glowed scarlet.

'How *mean* you are,' she answered.

‘Your prospective good fortune has not altered your nature one whit. You still try to find a cover for your own faults, by the pretence of laying the same blame on others. You *know* that I have never encouraged the attentions of any man since I had the misfortune to receive yours. It would be well if you could say as much for yourself.’

‘I do not understand you,’ said Harland, with affected unconcern.

‘I can easily make my meaning plain to you,’ replied Iris, as she looked him steadily in the face.

Now that the supreme moment had actually arrived, her timidity vanished as if by magic. She appeared to be inches taller, as she stood before him, with her feet planted on the deck—every muscle in her body strained, and her lips firmly pressed upon her teeth. She looked like some mother about to do battle for her child,—like a martyr ready to die for her religion. The delicate, fragile girl had

become majestic under the influence of her righteous wrath, and as Harland tried to meet her flashing eyes, he cowered before their gaze.

And Iris felt as dauntless as she looked. All the misery of her married life came back to her in that moment—her husband's violence and cruelty—his cowardly attacks upon her honour—the mean way in which he had intended to desert her—to give her courage. She had the strength of twenty women as she stood before him, and had he attempted to lay a hand upon her, she would have struck him across the face. The tones of his sarcastic voice, ringing with the old insults, had raised her blood to boiling pitch, and few would have recognised Iris Harland, sitting in judgment on her recreant husband, with the Miss Douglas who had looked like a drooping lily in the second cabin, or even with the tearful Iris who had sat with her hand in Jack Blythe's the night before, and told him of the suffering she had passed through.

Godfrey Harland hardly recognised her himself. He trembled with fear. All his vaunted courage fled before the woman whom he had wronged, and left nothing but a sullen brutality behind it. How should he answer the questions she would put to him? In what possible way excuse himself? He felt there was nothing to be done, but to try and make peace with her. 'Peace at any price,' must be his motto, at all events for the present, and the future must take care of itself. And so all he answered to her assertion was,—

'I really don't know why you should meet me in this extraordinary manner, as if I had committed some crime in leaving England. You know that I was *forced* to leave it. I told you so plainly. What I want to know is, why *you* have left it also?'

'I left it to follow your fortunes, as I have a right to do,' replied Iris. 'You thought to evade me,—to leave me to starve in London. You knew that my

pride would not have permitted me to appeal to any of my friends, but, so long as I was off your hands, you did not care what became of me.'

'Oh, no, no; come, childie, it was not so bad as that,' replied Harland, trying to soothe her. 'I am going out to New Zealand for your good, as well as my own, and always intended to send you half of all that I may be able to earn there.'

'*It is a lie,*' replied Iris; 'and don't you dare to call me by that name, for I will not stand it. What you intended by going out to New Zealand was to marry Grace Vansittart, and ignore me altogether. Don't take the trouble to deny it, for I know everything. I sat behind you last night at the theatricals, and heard every word you said to each other. And now Godfrey Harland, who holds the trump card—you or I?'

He did not attempt to answer her, but turned his face towards the open door, and stood gnawing his moustaches, and

wondering how he should extricate himself from the morass of perplexity in which he was sinking.

‘ You did not give one thought to *me*—left to struggle with poverty as best I could. Had I remained behind, I might have become anything—a lost, abandoned woman—God knows! But I have followed you, as you see, and I am here to claim you as my husband.’

‘ How did you find out I was travelling by the *Pandora*? ’ he asked. ‘ Who has been playing the spy upon me? ’

‘ No one but yourself! You are supposed to be a clever man, but cleverer men than you have been foiled before now by a woman. Did you think I believed all you told me about your flight to Harfleur, when you bid me good-bye, and left your Judas kisses on my lips. Why, I had Mr Vansittart’s letter in my pocket at that very moment, and knew that you had accepted the offer contained in it.’

‘*Mr Vansittart’s letter,*’ stammered Harland.

‘Yes ; the letter which you left behind you when you went to keep the appointment which sealed your fate and mine. Godfrey, I have followed you across the Atlantic, not from feelings of affection, but revenge. I have a right to claim support and recognition at your hands, and if you refuse to give them me, you must take the consequences.’

‘What will you do ?’ gasped Harland.

‘I will expose you before the whole ship’s company. I will let Captain Robarts, and the Vansittarts, and everybody know *what* you are, and *who* you are—not Mr Godfrey Harland, the gentleman who is not too proud to work for his living, in order that he may aspire to the hand of his employer’s daughter ; but Godfrey Harland, the married man who deserted his wife—Godfrey Harland, the gambler and bettor, who had to fly from his creditors—nay, more than that,’ con-

tinued Iris, waxing louder in her excitement, 'Godfrey Harland, who is not 'Godfrey Harland' any more than they are, but *Horace Cain, the forger, who—*'

'Stop, stop, for God's sake!' he cried, in a hoarse voice, as he extended a trembling hand towards her mouth. '*Stop*, and let me think for a moment what is best to be done.'

'Ah, Godfrey, *you* are the one to plead for mercy now!' she exclaimed triumphantly, as she watched him wipe away the beads of perspiration that had started to his brow.

The violence of the squall still prevented the sailors that were below from leaving their retreat, and the passengers from coming on deck. Had it been fine weather, this conspicuous place of meeting, and the high words that were passing between Harland and his wife, would certainly have attracted notice; but the howling of the wind, and the raging of

the turbulent sea, were more than sufficient to drown their conversation.

‘I suppose that brute Farrell has been talking to you,’ said Godfrey, when he had somewhat recovered his equanimity; ‘and I have to thank him for the information you are so ready to believe. But I can tell you, you have been made a dupe of. The man is a confirmed liar. I met him before we came on board ship, and gave him a bit of my mind, and he is trying to revenge himself on me for it now. However, that is *my* concern. You can safely leave me to deal with Mr Will Farrell, and his unauthorised libels. But what am I to do with regard to yourself. You have chosen to follow me out of England against my wishes, and to put in your claim to be considered my wife. Suppose,’ he continued, significantly lashing his legs with an end of rope he had picked up from the deck, whilst he eyed her with his sinister glance, ‘*suppose* I choose to accept the

position, and treat you as a husband has a right to treat a rebellious wife—what then ?’

‘You *dare* not,’ she panted. ‘If you attempt to raise your hand against me in the slightest degree, I will carry out my threats at once, and appeal to the passengers for help.’

‘And what if I wait to punish you for your cursed impudence till we get on shore.’

‘I will have you placed in arrest,’ she answered, ‘as a suspected forger. Don’t think I have no proofs against you. Farrell has them all ready, in case of need. If you begin to bluster and bully in your old fashion, you will find that I have the upper hand, and I mean to keep it. Remember that in another week we shall be in harbour, and I shall only have to summon the police to see you carried back to England in irons.’

‘That’s a nice thing for a wife to say to her husband,’ commenced Harland angrily,

and then changing his tone, he continued, 'Come, you would never go as far as that, I'm sure. Whatever you may think of me now, you loved me once, and for the sake of the old times, let us try and talk reasonably together. Tell me what it is you want, and if I can agree to your terms, I will.'

'I am your wife,' replied Iris firmly, 'and I want my rights—that is, I want a home kept over my head, and for you to remember that you are not free to court or marry another woman.'

'But yet you do not care for me yourself,' he said.

'*Care for you!*' she echoed scornfully. '*How* can I care for a man who has shown himself to me in so utterly contemptible a light? No, Godfrey Harland, I hate and despise you. But you shall not ignore what you are to me for all that. I will not permit you to commit a crime at my expense.'

'Oh, nonsense!' he said, in his old *non-*

chalcant manner. 'A crime is no crime unless it injures somebody. Now what is the use of you and me keeping together? You say you hate me, and although I would not be so rude as to use so harsh a term as that to a lady, I certainly must confess that I am somewhat tired of you. Now, look here, Iris,' he continued, drawing closer to her, 'why shouldn't we play into each other's hands? You can't have any real jealousy of me, and I dare say (if the truth were told) there is some nice young fellow in the background whom you like much better. Promise to leave me alone, and I'll make it worth your while to do so. Let me settle you at Canterbury, and go on quietly with the Vansittarts to their destination, and carry out my little plans with regard to Grace, and I'll engage to remit you a certain sum quarterly, as long as you leave us in peace. And then you know, my dear, my misconduct will set you free—morally, if not legally—to marry again yourself, and we

shall both be much the better for the arrangement; and in a new country, no one need ever be the wiser. What do you say? Is it a bargain?’

But Iris’s hazel eyes, wide open with horror and indignation, flashed fire on him.

‘Oh, Godfrey,’ she cried, ‘you must be a devil in the shape of man, to tempt me to such a crime!—to bargain with me for so much a quarter, not only to keep silence with regard to yourself, but to follow your example, and sin too. Do you know what it means? Do you know that you will be a bigamist,—a criminal within the pale of the law,—and liable to transportation for your offence. Oh, isn’t the other terrible misdeed bad enough, without your wishing to add to it like this?’

‘Don’t whine, or preach,’ he said impatiently. ‘You know how I hate sermonising and cant. Will you do it, or will you not? That is all I want to hear from you.’

‘No, no, no, a thousand times over.

Do you think I am as degraded as yourself? I will not do it, nor countenance it. I will go straight to the Vansittarts (as I ought to have done at the beginning) and warn them against you, as a bad man and a deceiver. You shall not ruin another woman's life as you have done mine.'

'I defy you to do it!' exclaimed Harland, grasping her tightly by the arm; 'I will throw you into the water first!'

'Leave go of me at once, or I will call for help. Ah! you do not frighten me with your threats, you coward! You can wage war with helpless women, but your face would tell a different tale if a man rushed in to my assistance. And I tell you that I am determined. I have made up my mind. If you do not abandon at once and for ever your infamous intentions with respect to Miss Vansittart, I shall inform her parents who I am, and why I am here. But I will give you one more chance. I cannot believe but that, when you have time to think more calmly, you

will see the utter folly of the course you are pursuing. So I will say nothing until to-morrow. Give me your written word by then, that you will live as you should do for the future, and my tongue is silent. And now you know my mind, and can make up your own.'

And with that Iris stepped out from the house amidships, and left Godfrey Harland by himself.





CHAPTER VI.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

HE did not stir for some moments after she had disappeared. He was fearful lest the sailors on deck should suspect there was some connection between them if they quitted the place together. And his reflections as he paced to and fro the berth, were anything but pleasant ones.

‘How *dared* she follow me?’ he soliloquised, with rage and anger gnawing at his heart. ‘She has blighted my last

chance, frustrated all my plans, and now defies me to save myself! Farrell, of course, has blurted out all that infernal business to her. I suppose that was the revenge he threatened me with the other night; and she will use it as a weapon against me. But I will put a stop to her tongue, curse her! She shall not stand in my way to fortune.'

He thought he might venture to leave the spare galley by this time, and making his way over the wet deck, he walked straight aft to the saloon, and throwing himself on one of the lounges, called the steward to fetch him a brandy-and-soda.

He had never felt so upset in his life as he did from this annoying interview. It had half maddened him! What on earth could he do or say to stop the chattering tongue of a jealous and spiteful woman? It would be as easy, he thought, to dam the falls of Niagara! And it took more than one brandy to

quiet in any degree his shaken and agitated nerves.

Then he rose and walked, trembling in every limb, to his own cabin, and, locking the door, threw himself down upon the bed and tried to think what was best to be done. One thing only seemed clear to him. If he allowed Iris and Farrell to have their own way, he stood a very good chance of ending his days as a felon! She had said that Farrell held the *proofs* of his forgery! What proofs? Where had he procured them? What did he retain them for, except to work his ruin? *If* he could only get rid of those proofs, he would be safe. But then there was Iris—his bane and his curse—always ready to reappear and spoil his chances with Grace Vansittart. She was too virtuous to consent to go halves with him in obtaining their mutual freedom; but she would not prove too virtuous, he would bet, to drag him from the quiet and respectable

life he intended to lead, back to poverty, and shame, and public disgrace! What if he could get rid of them *both* together! If he could only induce Iris, on the pretence of following her wishes in the matter, to bring him the proofs that Farrell held against him, by night, and then—

‘But no,’ he thought, with a visible shudder, as his hands twitched nervously, ‘I couldn’t—*I couldn’t!* I am in her devilish clutches,—actually in her power, and there is no way out of it but one. I must give up Grace, and all my future prospects, and return to my old life of hopeless impecuniosity. Oh, it is *too* hard! Why on earth was I such a fool as to let her discover my intentions? I ought to be hung, for such a piece of senseless imbecility.’

Here he lay for some time in silence, thinking deeply. After a while, a cold, cruel smile crept over his hard features, as though his perplexity were solved.

‘Of course, *the surgery*. Nothing can be easier; and I’ll have those proofs, if nothing else. I’ll send Iris a model letter, asking her to meet me to-night in the spare galley, to settle what is best to be done in the matter; and if I can persuade her to bring the proofs with her, I’ll take good care she doesn’t take them back again. I’ll put one witness against me out of the way, at all events, until I have determined what to do with the other.’

After this fashion Godfrey Harland talked to himself, whilst locked up in his berth; and by the time the dinner-bell rang, he felt too nervous and excited to trust himself to join the other passengers.

It was a bleak, cold evening. The sky was blue, and spangled with bright stars, and every now and then the moon shot forth white darts of light; but they were frequently obscured by heavy squalls which covered the heavens, whilst they lasted, with a heavy drapery.

In the rare intervals, the white sails and masts of the *Pandora* stood out in bold relief against the sky, and the crested swells were lit up with rays of silver. The ultra-marine blue above, with its thousands of little lamps, contrasted strangely with the sage-green waters; and a wicked-looking cloud that was rising astern served as a most becoming background for the sea and air.

The deck was cast well in shadow when the figure of a man, who had been standing about for some time in feverish suspense, emerged from the shade of the companion-ladder, and stole towards the surgery door, which was between the long saloon passage and the berth of the second officer. Glancing around more than once, to make sure that no one was at hand, he pushed back the lock with his clasp-knife, and with a sudden wrench turning the handle, disappeared from sight, and closed the door behind him.

The saloon passengers, as they finished their dinner, rose from table and donned their overcoats and wraps, with a view to going on deck.

‘Now, that’s a bargain, doctor!’ laughed Alice Leyton; ‘six pairs of gloves if the *Pandora* gets in under three days?’

‘Yes, Miss Leyton; and from the very best glover in Canterbury.’

‘I take sixes, remember, and never wear less than eight buttons,’ said Alice.

‘Don’t count your buttons before we reach the goal,’ replied the doctor merrily. ‘I think (luckily for me) they are still looming a long way in the distance; for if we do not get a strong breeze by to-morrow at latest, Mr Coffin tells me we cannot possibly drop anchor till Sunday. But if you will excuse me, I will run and get the paregoric lozenges I promised Miss Vere.’

And Dr Lennard disappeared into the passage.

‘Very strange,’ he muttered to himself,

as he turned the handle of the surgery door. 'I thought I locked it before dinner. Hullo! hullo! Who's that? What are you doing in here?'

'It's all right, doctor,' replied Harland, confronting him with rather a confused countenance; 'don't be alarmed. I was sitting smoking on the weather-board, and dropped the end of my cigar inside, so I came after it, in case it might be dangerous.'

'There's nothing to catch alight here, though, of course, you should be cautious,' said the doctor, half suspiciously. 'By the way, did you find the door open?'

'Well, *rather*,' rejoined Harland. 'You don't suspect me of keeping skeleton keys, do you?'

'I don't suspect anything, but I certainly thought that I had locked the door when I put the key in my pocket. I must be more careful in future, or someone will be after my case of medical port.'

‘By Jove! yes,’ acquiesced Harland. ‘If any of these thirsty dogs of shell-backs were knocking about, they’d make short work of a dozen of port—wouldn’t they? The brutes drink like fishes.’

‘They’re not the only people aboard that know how to drink,’ answered the doctor dryly, with a meaning glance at his companion, who laughed awkwardly, and turned away to the lee side of the vessel.

At the same moment, Iris was reading over a letter which she had received from her husband, to Maggie and Farrell.

‘Don’t you go,’ pleaded the former; ‘don’t go nigh him, my pretty. He only wants to try and talk you over; and you’re so soft-hearted, I’m not sure but what you’ll give in to him.’

‘Surely you will not keep this appointment, Miss Douglas,’ urged Farrell. ‘We have only a few more days to spend on board now, and during that time, you should avoid him as much as possible.’

He only wants, as Maggie says, to persuade you to alter your mind. Write and tell him that it is made up, and you have nothing more to say to him on the subject.'

'You both seem to think me terribly weak,' said Iris, almost irritably. 'Do you suppose I can't take care of myself? I told Mr Harland my intentions plainly, and he quite understands there is no alternative. All he wishes is to see me again, in order that we may arrange together how best to carry out our plans. I think that is only reasonable. Did you listen attentively to his letter? Let me read it to you again :—

'MY DEAR IRIS,—I have been thinking deeply over what you said to me this afternoon, and I see you are right, and I must have been crazy to dream of doing anything else. Can you forgive me? If you can, it will help me to do my duty for the future, and I promise you

to act on the square. You say that Farrell holds proofs against me. Were I convinced of this, it would materially alter my plans for our well-doing. Are they accessible? I should much like to see them. Try and persuade him to let you have the custody of them for half-an-hour. I pledge you my word of honour not even to touch them. How could I do anything repugnant to your wishes, in so public a place as the spare galley? If you will meet me there to-night at ten o'clock, when the passengers are at supper, I will tell you what arrangements I have made for you on landing. It is possible we may be at Canterbury sooner than you anticipate, and it is best (in order to save gossip) that we should not leave the ship together. Do not fail to meet me to-night.—Yours, G. H.'

'Cant! Humbug!' exclaimed Farrell.
'There is some deep scheme hidden under this pretended repentance. You will be

a fool, Miss Douglas, if you comply with his request.'

'You are both against him,' said Iris. 'I know he has a hundred faults, but he *may* be sincere in wishing to amend his life. And *I* am not the one who should refuse to help him.'

And as she spoke, she twisted up the note, and held it in the flame of the swinging lamp.

'What are you doing?' cried Farrell quickly, as he attempted to rescue it.

'Burning my letter. Have I not a right to burn it?' returned Iris, in a tone of annoyance.

'Certainly; but I do not consider it a judicious act. It is evidence against him. Chicanery is written in every line. What should he want to see those proofs for, except to destroy them?'

'You all suspect him. Because he has sinned *once*, he can do nothing right in your eyes now,' said Iris impetuously. 'And I suppose, Mr Farrell, if I asked

you for those proofs, you would refuse to trust them to me?’

‘I should, indeed; for *your* sake more than my own. It is of little consequence to me whether he suffers the penalty of the law or not; but it is of the utmost importance that he should be kept in fear of it, to protect your interests.’

‘Then I shall go and see him without them, and tell him that you have no pity,’ replied Iris, as she rose and went to her own cabin.

‘Will she *really* go?’ demanded Farrell of Maggie.

‘I’m much afraid she will, unless I stop her. Ah, Will, she’ll be a deal too good to him. Them few soft words have melted her like fire does snow. Sometimes I think I’ll tell her all, and let her see what a double-dyed rascal he is; but then I couldn’t bear for her to look coldly on *me*. Lord! how the wind howls. It’s an awful night, ain’t it? A reg’lar storm. And what’s that? The

mistress cryin'! Ah, I must go to her, poor dear. This business has upset her altogether.'

'Try all you can to persuade her not to see that man again, Maggie.'

'I'll do my best; but if she's set on it, she will. But, there, let me go to her. I've a notion in my head I'll find a way out of it yet.'

She rushed to Iris, and found her (as she had anticipated) in hysterics. The excitement had overtaxed her strength, and Harland's apparently repentant note had finished the work. She sobbed and cried for a long time without control, and then was so exhausted she was obliged to lie down in her berth.

'Now! you're better,' said Maggie soothingly; 'and if you'll promise to lie quiet till I come back, I'll run and get something for you from the doctor.'

'Oh, no, Maggie! I must get up. It is time to go and meet Godfrey,' replied Iris, trying to rise.

‘I am sure it isn’t. It has only just gone nine. You have a whole hour yet. Rest a bit, my pretty, and let me get you some camphor, or you won’t be able to speak to him.’

Iris closed her eyes in acquiescence, and Maggie ran off in search of Dr Lennard.

‘Doctor,’ she said persuasively, ‘my lady, Miss Douglas, has had the high-strikes, and I want to get her to sleep at once. Will you mix her a sleeping-draught, in some camphor, that she can take straight off.’

After a few questions, the doctor compounded the soporific, and Maggie took it back to the cabin and made Iris swallow it. In a few minutes her sobs relaxed, her eyes closed, her hands folded themselves over her heaving breast, and she was asleep. Maggie drew the blankets closely over her, and sat by her side until she was fairly off.’

‘*That’s* right,’ she thought, chuckling

to herself; 'that was very neatly done. She'll sleep sound, poor dear, till it's ten o'clock to-morrow morning. And now, shall I tell Will what I am going to do? I think not. He'll want to interfere, and spoil everything. I can manage matters much better by myself. I will go and meet Mr Harland, and find out what he really means to do; and I can pretend I've got the papers, until he's told me all his mind, and then I can discover I've left 'em below stairs after all. But I mustn't let him guess as it's me until I know his plans for the mistress, or he won't tell 'em. Let me see! How can I disguise myself?' looking round the cabin. 'Ah! there's my pretty's cloak, and the black worsted wrap; and I can put a veil over my face, and say I was afraid of being recognised by the saloon people. And now I must hoodwink Will. Lord, what a trouble all these men are! You can't do nothing with them without lying all round.'

A moment later she was in the general cabin.

‘She’s gone off nicely,’ she whispered to Farrell. ‘I got a draught for her from the doctor, mixed up in camphor, and she took it like a lamb and was asleep in five minutes. And I guess Mr Harland will have to wait a long time in the spare galley before he bullies her to-night, poor dear.’

‘Well, you *are* a clever girl,’ said Will admiringly; ‘you’ll be the smartest wife for miles round when you and I are married, Maggie.’

‘Well, mind you make me a husband to match, then,’ she answered, laughing. ‘But I’ll go to bed myself now, Will, for I’m reg’lar tired. I think the wind makes one sleepy.’

‘All right! I’m just off for a game at cards with Perry. Good-night, my dear!’

Maggie whisked away, with the cloak and shawl thrown over her arm, and at

ten o'clock she issued from the steerage so completely enveloped in them that no casual observer could have said if it were she or her mistress. The night was pitchy dark. Nothing could be seen all round the vessel but the boiling foam, flashing with sparkling diamonds of spray, that rushed in seething suds from the vessel's bows. To watch the *Pandora* at this moment from her top-gallant forecastle was a glorious sight. The bank of snowy lather that was dispersed on either side to make way for her keel, tossed and rolled over in impotent fury; the plunges of the ship's cutwater, that often dipped her harpoon-shaped martingale deep into the sea; the angry waves that dashed against her figurehead, and the breakers that leaped fitfully against her sides, as if they panted to drag her down to the unfathomable deep, composed a scene of majesty and awe. The sailors knew that they might expect a stiff gale. Mr

Coffin had stowed all her smaller sails, shortening her down to topsails, and clad in his long weather coat awaited the coming storm.

The freshening wind hummed in the rigging, and made the loose ropes beat against the backstays. With a long stretch the *Pandora* careened over on her side, and set off at a swinging pace on her course.

The sailors on watch, considering they had done enough work for that evening, and knowing there would be plenty for them by-and-by, had turned into the forecabin to put on their oilskins. Only the 'wheel' and the 'look-out' were on deck, and the darkness made even them invisible, as Maggie Greet, disguised in Iris's long mantle, entered the open door on the leeward of the spare galley. Godfrey Harland was already there, and moved a few steps towards her.

'I felt sure you would see the wisdom of meeting me,' he said; 'we will soon

set this matter right now. Come from the open door and stand nearer this way ; there will be the less chance of what we say to each other being overheard.'





CHAPTER VII.

THE MURDER.

MAGGIE did as he desired her, in silence, and the two stood close together in the seclusion of the spare galley. The wind roared and howled outside, and lashed the waves into a murderous fury against the proud ship that dared to plough her way through them, but Harland spoke in low, incisive tones, and every word he uttered was audible to his companion.

‘I have been thinking over what you said to me this morning,’ he commenced, ‘and I felt it was quite necessary we

should see each other again. The fact is, you took me so completely aback by your unexpected appearance and your vehement accusations, that I really did not know what to say to you. But you are utterly mistaken in thinking I have any *real* intention to marry Miss Vansittart. How *can* I have, when I am married to you? The thing is too silly to be refuted. You say you overheard me talking a lot of nonsense to her last night. I acknowledge I did. The girl has taken an inordinate fancy for me, and I don't quite see my way out of it; and so—well you know what we men are,—bad hats, the very best of us, when there is no one by to keep us straight,—but I never meant anything serious by it, upon my word of honour. Don't you believe me?’

‘Yes,’ replied Maggie, in the lowest of whispers.

‘You needn't be in the least afraid of our being overheard. It would take a

speaking - trumpet to make one's self understood through this gale. However, what I want to explain to you, Iris, is, that my worst fault has been in concealing the fact of your existence from the Vansittarts. *He* made it a proviso that his agent should be an unmarried man, and as I did not intend to take you out with me, I thought there was no harm in holding my tongue on the subject, at all events until I had made myself indispensable to him. And the deception has entangled me in a dilemma, as deceptions generally do. But the idea of my marrying Miss Vansittart is too utterly ridiculous. I have let her talk as she pleased about it, and I have "chaffed" her back in return, but she knows, as well as I do, that it can never be. Do you understand?'

'Yes,' repeated Maggie, in the same tone.

'Well, as that affair is settled, I'll tell you what I think will be best to do for both of us. I can't afford to give up

this appointment (it's six hundred a year, and will be raised by-and-by), and I should not be able to support you if I did. So you must let me settle you quietly at Canterbury in some respectable boarding-house, where you will have society, and I will send you remittances monthly until it is safe for you to join me again. It won't be long first. Of course, since you are in the country, it will be to my advantage to have you with me, and I shall seize the very first opportunity to confess the truth to Mr Vansittart, and ask his pardon for not having informed him of my marriage from the first. I don't think he will be hard upon me, especially as he sees his daughter has taken a fancy to me, and is anxious to put a stop to it. For, of course, I should never have been a suitable match for her, even if I had been free. He will require money with any suitor for her hand. Are you quite satisfied now?'

Again Maggie answered only by a monosyllable, and her reticence aroused Harland's suspicions.

'What the deuce is the matter with you, that you can't speak?' he said, irritably. 'Are you trying some game on me? I warn you not, for I won't stand it. Now, look here. I can't do as I have told you, unless I feel that I am free from that brute Farrell. It's of no use my trying to make a position for myself in a new world, if he has the power to come forward whenever it pleases him, and denounce me as a criminal. You say he holds certain written proofs against me. Is this really the case? Have you spoken to him about them? Have you got them with you?'

'Yes,' she said again.

'Let me see them,' replied Harland quickly; and as he spoke he struck a match against the heel of his boot, and held it on a level with her face.

The sickly blue flame flared up for a

moment, and revealed the features of Maggie Greet.

‘*Maggie!* by all that’s holy!’ exclaimed Harland, starting backwards. ‘What do you mean by playing this trick upon me? Why was I not told of this before?’

‘Told of *what* before?’

‘That you were on board ship, in company with my wife. That I had been tracked by a couple of you—confound you both!’

‘Oh, yes! I daresay you’d like to confound us both, very much. You’ve tried your best to do it already, Mr Harland, but you ain’t clever enough. That’s where the fault lies, you see!’ cried Maggie unabashed. ‘And now, what may you have to say to Mrs Harland, as you can’t say to me?’

‘Be quiet, you baggage!’ returned Godfrey angrily, ‘and go back to your berth. My business lies with your mistress, and not with you.’

‘Oh! well, then, you won’t see my mis-

tress, and so you may do as best you can without her. She has friends on board as won't consent to her being handed over, without protection, to the clutches of a brute like you; and so if you have any message for her, you can send it through me.'

'Go to the d—l!' cried Harland, turning on his heel. 'I shall not stay here a minute longer.'

'Not even to get them papers?'

'What do *you* know about the papers?'

'As much as yourself, I fancy, and p'r'aps more. You asked me just now if I'd got 'em, and I said "*yes*;" but if they're no use to you, I may as well carry them back again.'

'From whom did you get them?' demanded Harland, retracing his steps. 'From that brute Farrell?'

'Don't you call better men than yourself names,' retorted Maggie sharply. 'Farrell's worth fifty of you, any day. Yes, I did get them from him. Who else?'

‘Your mistress showed you my letter, then?’

‘Yes, she did, and a pack of lies it was, into the bargain.’

‘Take care how you insult me!’ cried Harland.

‘Look here, Godfrey Harland,’ said Maggie, ‘don’t you try any nonsense on me, for I’ll soon bring you to your marrow-bones. Will Farrell’s papers is *my* papers. Do you understand now? He is going to marry me as soon as we land in New Zealand, and there’ll be *two* against you then, instead of one. What do you say to that?’

‘He’s welcome to my leavings: they’re good enough for him,’ returned the man ironically.

Maggie’s hot blood rose to fever heat.

‘Oh, you blackguard,—you black-hearted villain!’ she exclaimed. ‘*This* is the reward a woman gets for letting herself be trampled on by men. You *know* I was innocent enough when I first came to you.

I was a poor, ignorant, country girl, as hardly knew right from wrong, and you left your sweet young wife, who'd never done you an unkindness, to stoop to teach me how to sin. Lord forgive me!' cried poor Maggie, with a choking sob in her throat, 'for I've never forgiven myself. Many and many's the time I'd have run away and drowned myself, for I didn't feel fit to live, except for *her*. But she wanted me, and I hadn't the heart to leave her alone with you. *I* knew how cruel and wicked you could be, when the first fancy had died out of you, and that you weren't fit to have the care of any woman. Oh, how cruel and false you have been to her, and made me be too! Oh, my poor mistress! If I could die to make her happy, I would. But nobody can be happy as has to do with *you*.'

'You're pleased to be complimentary,' sneered Harland.

'I speak the truth, master, and you know it. You know you've been her ruin;

as well as mine. I'm only a poor girl, and don't signify p'r'aps so much. But *her*, so delicate and high-bred—sich a lady as she is, from head to foot. You ought to be hung for what you've done to *her*. Do you think *I* believe all your palaver about not marrying Miss Vansittart? Not I. *She* might have, poor dear, but *I* know you better. It was all put on to deceive her, and get hold of the papers. You'd have settled her in Canterbury, yes! and then she'd never have heard of you, or your money, again. Don't I know the liar you are?'

'Have you got those papers?' demanded Harland fiercely. 'I suppose they're for sale. What's their price?'

'Oh, yes, they're for sale—never fear; but I doubt if *you* can buy them. They're going in exchange for my mistress being acknowledged openly as your wife, and placed in her proper position, and treated with kindness for the future, and *then*, p'r'aps, Will and

I may talk about letting you have the papers.'

'D—n Will and you!' exclaimed Harland, as his eyes gleamed with hate and fury on her.

'Will and I are much more likely to do that for *you*, Mr Harland. We have neither of us much cause to love you. You have ruined both our lives,—robbed us of our good names, and left a nasty stain behind you which nothing will wipe out. I don't think we owe you much—unless it is revenge. And we'll have our revenge, never fear, unless you buy us off. Do your duty by the mistress, plain and above-board, or we'll take good care you don't work mischief to any one else. It wouldn't take many words from us to get you locked up, and that's what we mean to do, both on us, as sure as your name's Godfrey Harland.'

'You *do*—do you?' replied Harland, with clenched hands and teeth.

He had made up his mind how to act

whilst she was speaking. The dose he had obtained for Iris would do just as well for Maggie, and he pressed closer to her with it in his hand. She, foreseeing meditated violence in his action, raised her fist and struck him in the face, then turned and rushed out of the spare galley on to the darkness of the quarter-deck. It was still deserted, the passengers were in the saloon, the seamen in the fore-castle, and the howling of the gale permitted only itself to be heard. As Maggie tried to stem her way against the driving wind, which seemed to push her backwards with every step, she stumbled against the steam-winch, and in another moment Harland had caught and held her from behind.

A murderous hand was placed upon her throat, a handkerchief, which exhaled a sickly, sweet, intoxicating fume, was pressed tightly over her mouth and nostrils, and her body was held by his against the main rail. She could not move ; she could not

scream ; she could not even think. For a moment she struggled feebly, and clutched with her dying grasp at Harland's garment. But the next, all things seemed growing dim — the memory of her wrongs—the fear for her safety—even the knowledge of the presence of Death faded from her as the fumes of the chloroform mounted to her very brain, and her breath came in gasps, which grew shorter and shorter until they ceased altogether. Then her body was lifted quickly in strong arms from the deck, and thrust over the mainrail, and it hit the bumpkin with a dull thud, as it dropped silently into the seething deep.

It plunged beneath the surface and rose again, and the *Pandora* passed ahead of it, scattering banks of white foam in her wake, like a sea shroud for the dying. For in that moment Maggie Greet's senses had returned to her. She felt the icy water flowing over her head, and into her ears and mouth.

Oh, what was this? What had happened to her?

‘Is it some awful dream? Where am I? Who put me here? Oh, Will, Will, save me!’ But the wind roared to prevent all chance of her feeble cry being overheard, and the merciless waves flowed over her head again, and sucked her body down. ‘Oh, to die like this! My poor mistress! God in heaven! forgive me.’

Again her body disappeared, and after an agonising struggle for life, poor Maggie rose once more, feebly murmuring, ‘I forgive—forgive,’ and then sunk beneath the waves for ever.

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Meanwhile, Godfrey Harland leant against the mainrail, sick and dizzy with horror at the deed which he had done, and staring with blank eyes at the boiling sea, in which the girl he had ruined had disappeared. The handkerchief he had pressed against her nose and mouth,

reeking with chloroform, was still held in his hand. In his confusion, he did not even know that it was there. He had never meant to go so far as this. He had prepared the chloroform to use in case of his experiencing any trouble in getting the papers into his possession, but when he saw Maggie so completely unconscious, and realised the danger of being caught in the act of searching her body, it seemed so much easier to throw her overboard, and get rid of her dangerous tongue and the proofs of his forgery at the same time. And now it was over, and there was no help for it. He gazed at the boiling foam as it dashed past the vessel, in a vacant manner, as though he half expected Maggie's face to rise from it and confront him, Maggie who was already miles away, drifting without sense or motion in the under-current of the sea. And as he gazed, strange to say, Godfrey Harland did not think of her as he had seen her last, but as she had been when

they first met—a pretty country girl, all faith in him and eagerness to obey his will—and his limbs shook under him as he remembered it.

‘Hullo! Harland! what are you doing here? It’s a rough night for musing,’ shouted a voice behind him. ‘We’re going to the smoke-room! Come along and spin us a yarn! The ladies have beat a retreat, and there’s not much to be done below.’

Godfrey Harland turned round to confront Captain Lovell and the doctor.

‘All right,’ he said unsteadily. ‘I’ll go with you. It’s the beastliest night we’ve had for a long time.’

As the three men ensconced themselves in the smoke-room, and took their seats, Dr Lennard snuffed the air.

‘Who’s got chloroform?’ he asked curiously. Lovell looked amused, and Harland started. ‘Why, it’s *you*!’ continued the doctor. ‘It’s on your handkerchief.’

‘Oh, yes,’ he stammered; ‘chloroform,

of course. I've been using it for a toothache. It generally does me good.'

'Have you a toothache now?'

'No, it's gone!' replied Harland, with an unquiet look round the cabin.

'Well! stow your handkerchief away, for goodness' sake, for it's too strong to be agreeable. I hate the smell of chloroform. It recalls unpleasant operations to me. You must have a sound heart, to be able to inhale it at that rate. I should think you must have had enough to kill two people on that handkerchief.'

And with a ghastly grin, that was intended for a smile, Harland thrust it deep into the pocket of his coat.





CHAPTER VIII.

MISSING.

THE threatening aspect which the heavens had assumed, turned out to be nothing more after all than a violent squall, which caused the *Pandora* to fly along at her topmost speed for a few hours, and then died away as quickly as it had sprung up, leaving a calm behind it. The wet sails beat with loud flaps against the masts in time to the roll of the vessel; the sheets and tacks were limp and slack; and the weather shrouds, which had made their lanyards and dead-eyes creak and groan, could be shaken with the hand—whilst

the fine old ship, which had behaved so gallantly under her widespread canvas, lay like a log on the ocean, and refused even to steer. The wheel was jammed hard down, sheets flattened, and everything done to help her, but it was of no avail. All the coaxing of her officers would not induce her to behave like a lady, and she drifted along idly, with her nose heading every point except the one she was wanted to follow. The *Pandora* was a true woman that night—wilful and headstrong, and refusing all assistance. She declined to answer her rudder—even the head-sails had no control over her—and her mizen had to be hauled up, since it only made her the more perverse and cantankerous. When all the sailors' efforts had failed, and they had given her up—at all events, for the present—as a hopeless job, a massive sheet of cloud appeared in the eastward. It was like its predecessor in shape and consistency, but of a brighter shade—a greyish, half-

mourning hue—and as it crept slowly towards them, like the mighty simoom of the Desert of Sahara, it shut out the surrounding scene from view. The moon and stars that were reflected on the still waters were soon enveloped in its dingy mantle, and before daybreak, the *Pandora* was hidden by a raw, penetrating mist.

It was a wintry fog, that carried on its breath the seeds of sickness and mortality ; that made itself felt through the thickest garments, and attacked the joints with stiffness and cramp ; that made the night humid, close, and unhealthy, and the day dark and cheerless ; that compelled the stewards to screw down the port-holes, lest the vapour should fill their only refuge with its disease - inspiring breath ; that mildewed the dry provisions, and rotted the vegetables that hung in the long-boat, and transformed the warm grasp of the friend of your bosom into a cold and clammy touch. When the passengers essayed to make

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their toilets, they had to light their lamps, and discovered that their glasses were dim, and their clothes damp with moisture ; nor could the pleasures of the breakfast-table send a glow through their benumbed bodies, nor restore the geniality of their tempers.

Captain Robarts, who has not as yet figured prominently in this history, simply because he never sought the society of his passengers, or concerned himself about their comforts, was that day more bearish and blunt (if possible) than usual. He was anxious about their safety. He was not quite certain as to their exact position on the chart, and he saw that he would have to work the vessel out by dead reckoning, instead of the surer method of ascertaining his longitude by the meridian altitude. He felt sure that he was not many miles from the coast, but if he had been able to shoot the sun, his mind would have been more at ease, and he would not have retreated to his

private cabin, and, after irritably slamming the door, have solaced himself with so many 'nips' from a mysterious flask which he kept in a cupboard at the head of his bunk.

'A gentleman from the second cabin wishes to speak to you, sir,' said the steward, after knocking several times for admittance.

Captain Robarts opened his cabin door and beckoned the man to enter, much to the disappointment of several curious listeners, who had hoped to hear all about the wants of the gentleman from the second cabin. A few minutes afterwards the chief steward left the saloon, and returned, accompanied by Will Farrell, who was ushered in to the presence of the captain.

'Morning, sir,' said Captain Robarts. 'I understand you have a communication to make to me. I am ready to hear it.'

Will Farrell stood before him, white and trembling, hardly knowing how to

begin. At last he stammered out that it was 'very serious.'

'Well, well, sir! I can't afford to waste my time over you. Let me know it, if you please,' replied the captain impatiently.

'One of the steerage passengers — a woman—is missing, sir! said Farrell, in a trembling voice.

'Indeed; and how did you find it out?'

'She—she — was my friend, sir — we were to have married each other, and she was quite safe last night at nine o'clock, because I spoke to her, and bid her "good-night." But this morning she's missing. No one's seen her, and the steward says she didn't sleep in her bunk last night.'

'And why did not the steward, whose duty it is, inform me of this himself?'

This question took poor Will Farrell completely aback. He had come in his grief and trouble to consult the chief person in the ship, but the terrible news he conveyed did not seem to move the hard, unfeeling heart of the man before him one

whit. The steerage steward was an uncouth being, working his passage out to New Zealand, and Farrell had begged leave of him to go and inform the skipper that Maggie Greet was missing. But he had not expected so cold a reception. He had thought the captain would immediately employ every available means to discover the whereabouts of his passenger,—that the ship would be thoroughly searched from hold to galley, and that if the mystery were not solved by it, a meeting would be at once convened to inquire into the cause of Maggie's disappearance.

When Captain Robarts saw that Farrell preserved silence, he continued,—

‘What is the woman's name?’

‘Greet, sir, Maggie Greet,’ was the answer, given in a choking voice.

‘Very good! That'll do! The matter shall be investigated,’ and rising from his seat, the old sea-dog opened the door, and showed his visitor the way out.

It was not long after that Mr Sparkes

was sent for, and ordered to report, as quickly as possible, on the particulars of the case, and enter a full description of the woman, with that of her friends, and when and where she was last seen, with all *et ceteras* in his day-book for the benefit of the skipper, who would have to jot it down in his official log. That Maggie Greet had been only a steerage passenger, rendered her disappearance of far less consequence than if she had belonged to the saloon ; still Captain Robarts thought it worth while to consult Mr Fowler on the subject, and that worthy was consequently summoned to a private interview in his cabin.

‘What is it all about?’ cried the passengers *en masse*, as Sparkes delivered the skipper’s message.

‘Only a steerage female passenger missing,’ replied the young officer airily.

‘*Only*,’ repeated Mr Fowler ; ‘only the chance of death for somebody.’

‘But does nobody know where she has gone?’ asked Alice Leyton stupidly.

‘No! or we shouldn’t be looking for her. Stumbled overboard, perhaps, in the squall. It was a roughish night. Mr Fowler, the captain would like to speak to you about it at once.’

‘All right; I will go to him,’ and he went.

The captain had soon repeated all he had been able to gather of the case.

‘You’d better leave it to me,’ said Fowler; ‘it’s either an accident or foul play, and in either case I’ll keep my eyes open, and see what I can make of it.’

‘There’s no suspicion whatever of foul play. The young man Farrell, who was to marry the girl, says she was safe at nine last night, and left him to go to her berth, but has not been seen since.’

‘And how does he account for himself since that time?’

‘Why, you don’t suspect *him*, surely,’ said the captain; ‘he is simply overcome with grief.’

‘Yes; I have seen them overcome with grief before. Never mind, captain.

I have my suspicions of more than one person aboard this vessel, and perhaps this little accident may be the wind-up of it all. I'll make things clear, if possible, before we touch port.'

'How will you set to work?'

'By putting two and two together. This young woman was rather strange in her ways, you know, captain.'

'Was she? I didn't know her, even by sight.'

'There were two of them, and they were always with this man Farrell, and always wrapped up in shawls, so that their faces couldn't be seen. They never came out till the evening, either, and then they'd slink away towards the fore-castle. All they seemed to wish was to avoid their fellow-creatures.'

'Perhaps it was some family trouble.'

'Perhaps it was, and it'll prove a case of *felo de se*. Though she was as sturdy a damsel (this one that's missing) as ever I saw, and not at all like a romantic

suicide. But one never knows what they'll do, if there's a man in the case. I remember an affair something like this one taking place in the *Wangarrie*, bound for Auckland. There was a lady of title on board, who had been confined to her berth for some days. Well, the stewardess had not left her above five minutes one afternoon when she was gone. She crawled out of one of the square stern windows in her *robe de nuit*, and dropped into the briny.'

'But this woman could not have gone out of the ports.'

'No, I suppose they're too small in the 'tween decks. I'll go down there in the dog-watch, and take a look round. But she may have jumped overboard during the squall, and no one have been the wiser; or she may have been *pushed* over.'

'You can't get the idea that it was intentional out of your head, Mr Fowler.'

'No, sir; and sha'n't, either, until I prove it to have been otherwise. For,

as I said before, I haven't been sleeping on the voyage, and I have my suspicions. But I'll clear out now, captain; I see you are busy with your chart,' and with a curt nod, Mr Fowler went about his business.

Before noon every soul on board the *Pandora* had heard and discussed the terrible news, but all were equally at a loss to account for it. Some agreed with Mr Fowler that poor Maggie must have been a little insane. Others suspected (though they dared not say so) the unfortunate Farrell, who (with Iris Harland) was overcome with grief for Maggie's loss, and believed his tears were only shed to avert suspicion from himself. Godfrey Harland was forced to mix with his fellow passengers, and hear all their comments on the subject, for he dreaded doing anything unusual so as to attract the general notice. He was very active, therefore, in arguing the point, and suggesting possible solutions of the mystery,

though he stuck faithfully himself to one opinion, that *if* the unhappy girl had had a lover, *he* was the person who should know most about it.

In every part of the vessel the unfortunate accident was commented on. In the forecastle, the galley, and the house amidships ; in the second cabin, the smoke-room, and on the poop deck it formed the sole topic of conversation.

The wretched Farrell, with eyes bleared and swollen from weeping, was bowed down under a sense of his loss. It was in vain that Iris implored him to take courage, to bear his trouble like a man, to remember how brave poor dear Maggie was, and how she would have been the first to condemn his utter prostration of mind and body. There was a deeper grief than the loss of his promised wife underlying his condition. Both his suspicions, and those of Iris, pointed to Godfrey Harland, though they feared to say so, even to each other. Maggie had

purposely sent Iris to sleep, and Farrell remembered afterwards that she had carried her mistress's missing cloak and shawl upon her arm. What had she taken them for, unless she intended to go on deck, and why should she go on deck but to meet Harland, instead of his wife? The case seemed clear to both of them, and yet they were so helpless to take their revenge. They did not even know where she had gone to, or if Harland had kept the appointment he made with his wife. Farrell would neither eat nor drink. His dinner and tea were carried away untouched, while he sat in his berth with his face buried in his hands, trying to find some solution to the awful mystery.

As the night watches were set, he was roused from the stupor into which he had fallen, by the advent of Mr Fowler, who, having tapped at his door, entered without further ceremony.

‘Come, come, Farrell!’ he commenced kindly, as he laid his hand upon the young

man's shoulder, 'you mustn't give way like this. Let me send for some liquor for you. Here, steward! bring Mr Farrell a brandy-and-soda,' and when it came he forced Will to drink it.

'It is very kind of you, Mr Fowler, to take the trouble to come and visit me,' Will said, as he tried to stop his gasping sobs. 'Few have done it, except Miss Douglas. I daresay you are surprised at my being so overcome by this loss; but it was so sudden—so unexpected—we were so full of hope and anticipation that—'

'Yes, yes, my boy! I quite understand,' replied Fowler. 'It was very dreadful—very dreadful, indeed. But have you any idea how it happened?'

'Not the slightest—at least, no certainty. The last time I saw her I was sitting down here, playing cards with my friend Perry, and she told me the wind had made her sleepy, and she should go to bed. I wished her good-night, and that was the last of it.'

‘She was a steerage passenger, I understand. How came she to be in the second cabin?’

‘Well, sir, there’s a lady here, Miss Douglas, who was a friend of hers. Maggie was—well, I don’t know why I should mind saying it—but my poor girl was in her service in England, and followed her across the sea, and used to come in here and look after her sometimes. Miss Douglas was ill last night, and Maggie had given her a sleeping draught and put her to bed.’

‘Pardon the digression, Mr Farrell, but what made Miss Douglas ill?’

Will Farrell’s eyes flashed. He would have blurted out the whole truth concerning Godfrey Harland to all the ship at that moment. Only one motive restrained him—the thought of Iris: But he clenched his fist as he answered,—

‘A scoundrel had been talking to her and upsetting the poor thing. She isn’t strong.’

‘And this scoundrel—excuse me—is also an enemy of yours, Mr Farrell?’

‘I didn’t say so, Mr Fowler.’

‘No, but I guessed it from the clenching of your hand as you mentioned him. And now let me tell you that I strongly suspect there is foul play somewhere, and I want you to assist me in clearing it up.’

‘I suspect it too, sir—more, I *believe* it, only I can’t give a reason why. But if I tell you my suspicions, *how* can you clear the matter up?’

‘Because my name of Fowler is assumed for professional purposes only. My real title is Mark Rendle, of Scotland Yard, and if things are not all square here, and *you* will help me, I will bring the murderer to justice.’

‘I’m your man!’ cried Farrell, as he stretched out his hand.





CHAPTER IX.

MR FOWLER.

‘**I** SUPPOSE you are a detective?’ continued Farrell, after a pause.

‘You are right. I am a private detective, but no one knows the secret but Captain Robarts and yourself, and I should not have confided it to you, except I feel that, for your own sake, you will keep it sacred. And now look here, my boy. I am a man old enough to be your father, and I have had much experience in these cases, with which I have been mixed up all my life. If we are to work together, you must tell me *the truth*. You must

hide nothing from me ; and you must give me your word of honour not to disclose a single thing that I may say to you.'

'I swear to you that I will not. But first tell me, Mr Fowler, have you come out to track any one aboard this vessel?'

'No. I am travelling in the interests of Messrs Stern & Stales, whose New Zealand firm has suffered lately from extensive robberies, instigated, it is believed, by the *employés*. The company sent me over in the *Pandora* to avoid suspicion. If I crossed in a steamer, certain business people, who are always going backwards and forwards through the Canal to Australia and New Zealand, might recognise me, and the news of my arrival would be spread through the island, and warn the thieves to be on their guard. Now let me hear all you have to tell me.'

Will Farrell then related in detail all that he knew of Horace Cain *alias* Godfrey Harland. He gave the whole history of the forged cheque, and the clever way in

which the suspicion had been cast upon himself. He told how he had made the acquaintance of Maggie Greet on board ship, and learned through her that her mistress, Miss Douglas, was in reality Harland's wife, and how Godfrey's open courtship of Miss Vansittart had induced Iris to reveal her identity to him, and to threaten to expose him. And he concluded with the incident of Harland's letter to his wife, demanding another interview at ten o'clock that night in the spare galley, and entreating her to bring the proofs that Farrell held against him, for him to see.

'Yes, yes, yes,' said Fowler impatiently; 'that is a dirty story enough, but what has it to do with Maggie Greet? I want to hear about *her*, and not Mr and Mrs Harland.'

There was one thing which Farrell had concealed, and that was the fact of Maggie's seduction by her master. He felt as if death itself could not drag it from him,—

as if it would be an insult to the dead woman he had loved even to allude to it. But he had a detective to deal with.

‘She was in their service when in England—I have mentioned that,’ replied Farrell confusedly; ‘and she was very much attached to Miss Douglas. It was all Maggie’s doing that she didn’t go to that interview with her husband. She meant to do so, but Maggie was afraid of mischief (she told me so), so she procured a draught from Dr Lennard, and sent Miss Douglas straight off to sleep, under pretence of soothing her hysterical condition.’

‘Very good. What did Miss Greet do then?’

‘She came up to my side in the second cabin, and said, after telling me about Miss Douglas, “I’ll go to bed now, Will, for I’m regular tired. I think the wind makes one sleepy.”’

‘And did she go to bed?’

‘How can I tell, sir? I never saw her

again. But the steerage steward says she didn't.'

'Now, just think, Mr Farrell. Did you remark anything strange about her manner when she bade you good-night?'

'Not at the time, or I should have spoken of it. But after she was missing, Miss Douglas told me that her big cloak that she always wore, and woollen wrap, were also gone from her cabin, and then I seemed to remember, like a flash of lightning, that Maggie had a bundle of cloaks or something over her arm when she spoke to me.'

'And you think she took them on purpose?'

'Yes. I think now she took them that she might look like her mistress, and that she went on deck to take her place, and keep that appointment with Godfrey Harland—*curse him!*' said Farrell, between his teeth.

'This becomes interesting,' remarked the detective coolly. 'But now, Mr

Farrell, the question arises, What reason Miss Greet should have had to wish to prevent her mistress meeting Mr Harland ?'

'She believed harm would come of it. He had treated his wife cruelly before.'

'She had not a good opinion of her master, then ? She did not like him ?'

Farrell answered curtly in the negative.

'Do you know if Miss Greet had any cause to mistrust him ?'

'She knew he was a brute, and I had told her about the forgery.'

'But *personally*, I mean ? Was there any feeling like jealousy or revenge at work in the matter ?'

'Not jealousy, certainly,' answered Will. She was going to marry me—she was fond of me.'

'But formerly—before you met the girl—had there ever been any love-passages between her and this Godfrey Harland ?'

Farrell opened his eyes in amazement.

‘Are you a wizard?’ he asked.

‘No, my boy, only a detective! But that means a close observer of human nature, and an aptitude for hitting on the right cause for every effect.’

Will was silent.

‘Come, now! I appreciate your reticence, but this is no time for false modesty. Doubtless Miss Greet told you all her secrets. Had she any reason to wish to be revenged on Harland, or he for getting rid of her? If you won’t tell me the whole truth, I can do nothing for you.’

‘All right, sir! I *will* trust you, for it can’t do *her* any harm now, and it may be the means of avenging this cruel loss. She *had* good cause to hate him, poor thing, and he, perhaps, to be afraid of her! He had seduced her years before, when she first went to live in his wife’s service, and Maggie despised him for it,—as well she might, and all the more because she had grown to be so fond of

Miss Douglas. That's the truth, Mr Fowler, and I hope you'll keep it sacred.'

'You may depend upon me, Farrell, and it's a valuable clue. We have arrived at this conclusion, therefore : At the time that Mr Harland was waiting to see his wife in the spare galley, she was asleep in her berth, and Maggie Greet, with her mistress's cloak and wraps over her arm, walked out of the cabin, and was never seen again. She was a woman also who mistrusted her master, and had an old grudge against him, and whose desire for revenge, too, might prove very awkward to himself. That is true, is it not?'

'It is so, Mr Fowler; and every moment the case seems to become clearer to me.'

'Now, Mr Farrell, do you really hold the proofs you have mentioned against Mr Harland?'

'Yes ; I have certain letters written, and copies of statements made, at the time of

the forgery, which would go very hardly against him were I to produce them.'

'And did you lend them to Miss Greet?'

'Oh, dear, no! She never asked me for them.'

'You are *sure* you have them still?'

'Quite sure! I was looking at them this afternoon.'

'Then she could not have taken them, as desired, for him to see?'

'No; but I think she may have *pretended* to have them, sir, just to gain time to say what she wished to say to him, and then, when he found he had been deceived, the brute may have revenged himself on her by—ah, it is too horrible to think of!' cried Farrell, breaking off in another burst of grief.

'Or she may have fallen overboard by accident, don't forget that, Farrell. It was a terrible night, and the sailors say they couldn't have heard any cries through such a squall. It doesn't lessen the loss to think so, but it is as well not to accuse

anybody of a crime, even in our thoughts, until we are sure of it.'

'That villain is capable of anything,' said Farrell doggedly.

'And now about this Miss Douglas, as you call her? Is there any one on board who knows her to be the wife of Harland beside yourself?'

'I think not, and I have no proofs. She and Maggie Greet both told me so. That is all I know.'

'That is unfortunate. At present, it seems to me that all we can do is to watch and wait. Even if Mrs Harland comes forward to tell what she knows, we have no evidence that this Miss Greet ever went up on deck at all. The case seems pretty clear to you and me, but we have to make it clear to others. So I can do nothing more at present, and you must not mention a word of our conversation to any one on board, not even to Miss Douglas. You must try and be patient. I know you are burning

to charge Mr Harland with the deed—you feel so positive he is the guilty party that you almost wonder I do not clap on the “darbies” at once. But that is not our way of working. Supposing he were able to prove that he was all the time in the company of friends, we should at once lose the case, which, if properly worked, is bound to be cleared up one way or the other. Do you go with me?’

‘Yes, yes. I suppose it signifies little either way. Nothing will bring my poor girl to life again.’

To this sentiment Mr Fowler had naturally no refutation, and so he withdrew noiselessly, and left Will Farrell to himself.

Nothing occurred during the following day of any interest. Iris Harland kept entirely to the second cabin. She hardly dared to *think* of how poor Maggie may have come by her death, and she dreaded, with a sickly loathing, the idea of meet-

ing her husband again. She even shrunk from seeing Vernon Blythe. She knew that he would question her so closely, and sympathise with her so deeply, that she was afraid of what she might say or do before him; and in answer to more than one kind note full of affectionate anxiety, she only begged him to leave her alone until she had somewhat recovered from the shock of losing her poor friend.

So the day passed on, gloomy and uneventful. The passengers conversed in undertones on the marvellous disappearance of Maggie Greet, and the captain peered anxiously into the fog, which still forbade him the use of his sextant, and made him morose and irritable.

The *Pandora* remained motionless upon the water. The mist was so dense that it was impossible to see farther than seven yards from her side. It was a very perilous position, for at any moment she might have been cut down by a steamer. The

patent Aurora foghorn was constantly sounded, and every few seconds a long, deep-toned roar, like the lowing of a monster bull, echoed over the deep, and denoted the whereabouts of the helpless mariners and their living freight.

The sea resembled a sheet of boiling metal, throwing off vast clouds of steam, which, gathering in huge volumes in the air, hung suspended until some mighty wind should arise to drive them away. The mist clung about the rigging, and fell thence in large drops like rain. The decks were sodden and slippery. The brass-work of the bridge railings, the binnacles, and the gratings, which usually shone like gold, had turned to a sickly greenish hue, and red and orange rust oozed from the bulwarks and combings of the masts and stanchions, as if the vessel had been punctured with a hundred lancets, and was slowly bleeding to death.

The wretched cooped-up fowls, stand-

ing upon one leg, with their heads buried beneath their wings, uttered now and then a croupy remonstrance; the ducks huddled close together to try and keep out the damp chill, which even their natural oil could not withstand; and the three surviving sheep filled up the intervals between the lowing of the fog-blast, with a series of monotonous bleats.

In the fore-castle, the seamen 'yarned' together by the dim light of a miserable, smelling, paraffin-oil lamp, which filled the place with exudations of black smoke, which, combined with the strong flavour of cavendish, and the dank feeling of the mist, was anything but agreeable.

Now and again the foghorn of the *Pandora* would be answered faintly by a distant echo, which grew louder and louder, till all on board wondered what course the stranger could be making, till suddenly a tall, dark spectre would shoot rapidly past them in the gloom (like the celebrated Phantom Ship), making their

hearts beat with excitement, and vanish again as quickly in the fog, leaving only the disturbed water as a sign that they had been passed by an ocean-liner.

And so the day closed, and morning broke on the same blank prospect. The officers grumbled, the passengers fretted, and the shellbacks growled and swore like so many surly bears. Captain Robarts was still more uneasy than on the previous day. He had noticed that the barometer was falling, and he expected nothing short of a strong gust of wind to clear the horizon. He spoke to no one except his officers, and with them his consultations were short, hurried, and uncommunicative. Every one on board was in the dumps. It seemed as if the disappearance of Maggie Greet had cast the shadow of death over the vessel and all concerned in her.





CHAPTER X.

DRIFTING BACK.

BUT of every one on board the *Pandora* Godfrey Harland was in reality the most nervous and uncomfortable. He longed to be able to shut himself up in his own berth, and refuse sustenance, but he could not afford to do it. He felt it was indispensable for him to appear at meals, and pretend to have a good appetite, and to talk and laugh loudly, as he had been wont to do, but he was obliged to pay for it afterwards by drowning his thoughts and dulling his conscience with copious draughts

of brandy. And notwithstanding all his efforts to appear jolly and at his ease, he could see that his fellow-passengers were not quite the same to him as they had been before. Although Will Farrell and Mr Fowler had kept their own counsel, hints *would* leak out—a word was dropped here and there, or a look given—and Mr Harland's companions began to glance shyly at him. His jests were not responded to; his offers of assistance were rejected; and conversation was hushed as he drew near. Even Grace Vansittart seemed to avoid him, and drop her big brown eyes confusedly when they met his. Harland perceived the general feeling, though no one was brave enough to express it openly, and it drove him to drink. For two nights he drank to intoxication; and after some hours of torpid sleep he ascended the poop deck, where, with bleared eyes and flushed and feverish face, he leaned upon the taffrail. The nervous twitching of the fingers that

clawed the buttons of his coat, his startled glances and trembling tongue, showed what havoc the drink had made with him. But the state of the weather was in his favour. Had not the thoughts of the ship's company been occupied with the fog and its possible danger, his conduct would have been far more noticeable than it was ; but all minds were too much wrapped up in their own welfare to have time to concern themselves about the doings of others.

As Godfrey Harland left the saloon, little Winnie Leyton escaped from her mother's side, and, disobeying orders, clambered step by step up the ladder, and landed herself on the poop deck. Dodging the officer on watch, who happened to be Vernon Blythe (who, she knew well, would soon re-consign her to her mother's care), the mischievous little imp concealed her tiny person behind the mizenmast, waiting until the young sailor had turned his back, and then pattered

aft along the wet deck to Harland's side. He hated children, and this one beyond others, because both her mother and sister had always displayed a marked aversion to him. So, to her innocent questions and remarks, he made no reply; and, tired of his silence, Winnie ran off to find a more congenial companion, and commenced to play 'peep-bo!' with the quarter-master on the lee side of the wheel-house, much to the amusement of that jolly tar. But children soon weary of any employment; so, after standing on the bench and shaking her arch little head, with its golden curls, at him through the window for the space of five minutes, she kissed the helmsman through the pane of glass, and jumped on the deck again.

'Tum here, tum here!' she cried presently, tugging at Harland's coat-tail; 'tum and see dis tunny ting.'

'Go along, you little beast! Go down to your mother, and don't bother me!'

he said angrily, as he shook off the dimpled hand.

Winnie made a wry face, and puckered up her rosebud mouth for a cry. She was not used to be called by such ugly names, and she did not understand them. But she summoned up courage to remark, before she did so—determined, like the majority of her sex, to have the last word,—

‘*Not* boddering! Dere *is* a tunny ting—in de water. *Dere!*’

‘It’s only a fish. Run away! I’m busy!’

‘I tink it sark. Do tum and see,’ persisted the child.

‘Where is it then?’ inquired Harland. ‘I suppose you’ll give me no peace till I *have* looked at it.’

Winnie pulled him along gleefully, delighted at having gained her own way.

‘Dere! *dere!*’ she exclaimed, pointing with her little finger to some object in the water.

But one look was enough for Godfrey Harland. With his eyes starting from their sockets with horror, he covered his face with his hands.

‘My God! my God!’ he exclaimed, in a voice of agony, as he rushed away and left the child by herself.

Winnie was terribly frightened. She couldn’t think what she had said, or done, to make the ‘cross man’ so angry with her; and bursting into a loud howl, she attracted the notice of ‘Brother Jack’ (as she still called him), who ran forward, and took her in his arms.

‘Why, what’s the matter, baby? Have you hurt yourself?’ he inquired tenderly, as he kissed the wet face.

At the same moment he was joined by Alice, who had been sent by Mrs Leyton to bring the truant back.

‘How naughty of you, baby, to run away directly mother left the cabin,’ she began reprovngly, but stopped on seeing her little sister’s tears. ‘Why, who

has made you cry, darling? Not Jack?’

‘As if “Jack” *would*,’ replied Vernon, with mock reproach. ‘It’s *you* who make *Jack* cry, Miss Alice.’

‘Much you’ve cried for me,’ she answered, in the same tone. ‘Why, you’ve looked twice as young and handsome since I set you free. But what has happened to Winnie?’

‘Man make faces at me,’ sobbed the child.

‘*Man!* What man?’ demanded Vernon.

‘Dere,’ said Winnie, pointing to the wheel-house.

But when Jack searched in that direction, he found no one. Harland, trembling with terror, had already hidden himself below.

‘I expect it was Mr Harland,’ said Jack. ‘He was the only person on deck a few minutes ago. What did you do to make him angry, Winnie?’

‘Sowed him a fis. I specks it’s dere now.’

‘Well, come along, and show it to Alice and me,’ he said, walking aft with the little child clinging to his hand. ‘We’ll look at Winnie’s “fis,” and see if we can catch it, and cook it for mammy’s dinner.’

‘Oh, Jack, how *sweet* you are!’ cried Alice enthusiastically.

She was of a romantic disposition, and occasionally given to these little outbursts of sudden regret for the lover whom she had voluntarily relinquished in favour of Captain Lovell. Jack looked at her with a world of merriment in his soft grey eyes.

‘Don’t be a fool, Alice,’ he said, laughing.

‘Oh! but you *are*,’ persisted the girl, with a suspicious mist obscuring her sight; ‘you are so kind to everybody. It seems to me as if you only lived to make other people happy.’

‘You’re very much mistaken then, for I can make myself deucedly disagreeable when I feel inclined. But let’s look out for Winnie’s “fis.” By Jove! Alice, that’s no fish! Wait till I get the glasses.’

‘What is it, Jack?’ asked Alice impatiently, as he took a long survey of the object in question. ‘Can’t you make it out?’

‘It looks like a black log from here; but these glasses are not very clear. But stay! there is something white on it. Good heavens! it is a body! It must be the woman who jumped overboard the other night.’

‘Oh, Jack! how *can* it be?’

‘I can swear it is the body of a woman, and with a black dress on. Here, Alice, you had better take Winnie below. This is no sight for either of you. And I must go at once and report it to the captain.’

Vernon Blythe was correct. Strange as it may seem, it was the body of poor

Maggie Greet, which had risen to the surface on the third day.

The *Pandora* had gone far ahead in the squall; but since then she had been slowly but surely drifting back again, and was now on the very spot where she had been three nights before, and the murdered woman floated on the waters within a hundred yards of her stern.*

A boat was lowered at once, and paddled to the quarter, and the corpse was reverently lifted into it, and carried to the surgery.

There was tremendous excitement throughout the vessel whilst the doctor's and captain's examination of the body—at which they invited Fowler and Farrell to be present—was going on; but it resulted in no discovery that could afford a clue to the manner of her death. Her long dark hair had fallen about her face, having been washed down by the action of the waves, and her face and figure

* A fact.

were much swollen, and beginning to show signs of discoloration. But there were no marks of violence to be seen, nor any evidence of a struggle having taken place, nor the slightest proof that she had been in any way even acquainted with Godfrey Harland. She still wore Iris's long cloak, tied round her throat, but the woollen wrap had fallen from her head. The poor dead girl formed a sad and solemn spectacle, and Will Farrell's grief at the sight of her was profound. After a rigid and careful examination, Mr Fowler led the poor fellow away to his own berth, fearful lest in his pain he should say or do something to cast suspicion on the man they both had in their mind's eye.

In the dog watch, the body, sewed in a canvas shroud, and heavily weighted at the feet, was laid on a grating covered with the Union Jack, and the bell was tolled to announce that the funeral was about to take place.

The passengers, with serious faces, clustered about the captain and his officers, who stood close to the grating, and the seamen, dressed in their Sunday clothes, clean shorn, and holding their caps in their hands, filled up the background. A burial at sea is one of the most solemn and impressive services imaginable.

The skipper, officiating in the place of a priest, with prayer-book in hand—the silent corpse that lies under the flag, ready to be committed to the deep—the infinite surroundings of water and space—the unfathomable grave—the words which are pronounced as the grating is withdrawn, ‘We therefore commit this body to the deep, to be turned into corruption, looking for the resurrection of the body, when the sea shall give up her dead’—the hollow splash—and the sobs that often break upon the succeeding silence, form a scene that cannot be wiped from the memory in a lifetime. There were many things to render it more

solemn than usual on this occasion. The mystery surrounding the sad fate of the young woman who had been their fellow-passenger affected most of the spectators strangely; and Will Farrell, although he had promised Iris to control himself, and his hated enemy, Godfrey Harland, stood with dry eyes within a few yards of him, broke down so completely, as the body disappeared from view, that his sobs seemed to penetrate every part of the vessel. Iris, though scarcely less affected, made no scene. She trembled like an aspen leaf when she saw her husband take his place amongst the mourners, and grew so deadly white that Vernon Blythe (who never took his eyes off her) thought she was going to faint. But she made a strong effort to recover herself, and stood silent throughout the ceremony. When it was over, indeed, and the passengers were dispersing, she walked to the gangway and took a long look at the water, whilst her tears dropped into it,

and she wished her poor faithful Maggie farewell until the light of another world should break upon them. And then she turned, and laid her hand upon Will Farrell's arm.

‘Come, Mr Farrell,’ she said gently, ‘and *leave the rest to God!*’

As she spoke the words, she raised her eyes, and encountered those of Godfrey Harland, and in that glance the wretched murderer read that his crime was known to her.

When the burial was over, and the sailors had resumed their duties, the bell rang for dinner, but few sat down to it. The women were overcome by the scene they had witnessed, and even the men were not inclined to be jolly or conversational after so solemn a ceremony.

‘Farrell,’ said Mr Fowler, as he entered the former's berth, and fastened the door securely behind him, ‘I am afraid the examination of to-day will lead to no results. There was absolutely no-

thing to guide us as to the manner of her death. If it did not occur by accident, we shall have to use other means by which to arrive at the truth.'

'I feel *sure* it did not occur by accident,' returned Farrell. 'Have you been able to speak to Harland yet?'

'I have not. He has been drinking very hard the last few days, and kept to his cabin, which is in itself a suspicious circumstance. But I have ascertained from the second officer, young Blythe, that there was something very strange about his conduct when the body was discovered to-day. He did or said something that nearly frightened Mrs Leyton's youngster into fits. But if he is guilty of the murder, he must be a very hardened villain, for I watched him narrowly during the burial service, and I could not detect the least signs of emotion. One thing only have I ascertained for *certain*, and that is, that he did not attend dinner on the evening of Miss Greet's disappear-

ance, neither did anybody see him afterwards, until Dr Lennard and Captain Lovell went on deck about eleven o'clock for a smoke, and found him leaning over the mainrail, and apparently gazing at the water. Of this there is no doubt. They are both ready to swear to it. Also, that he had so much chloroform on his handkerchief that the doctor turned quite sick, and begged him to put it away. Harland said he used the chloroform for toothache, and so he may have done. But the doctor has an ugly little story to tell about finding Mr Harland in his surgery on the afternoon of the same day, without his being able to give a good account of himself, and also of one of his bottles of chloroform being missing since.'

'But what can be clearer?' exclaimed Farrell.

'My dear fellow! it may be clear that Mr Harland took the doctor's chloroform without his authority, but there is no proof he did not use it (as he affirmed) for tooth-

ache. We can do nothing in this matter without hard, undeniable proofs.'

'We shall never do anything!' cried Farrell despairingly. 'The brute will go scot-free. It is always so in the world.'

'Not always, sir; in fact, *my* experience is that very few criminals escape in the long run; and this business won't be forgotten against Mr Harland—you may take your oath of that!'

'I should think I might,' returned Farrell. '*I* sha'n't forget it, Mr Fowler, and if the law doesn't punish him for it, *I will*. I shall live for nothing henceforward, but to see that man die as he killed her. He robbed me of the first half of my life, and just as I hoped I might live to forget all I had gone through on his account, and find some comfort in the love of a true-hearted woman, he robs me of her too, and in the cruellest and most dastardly manner! But he shall answer for it! I swear before God, he shall live to suffer as she suffered,—to die

hopeless, as she died! If the hangman refuses the job, I'll twist the rope round his dirty neck myself!

'Hush! hush! you must not speak like that,' said Mr Fowler; 'you are excited, and don't know what you are saying. Go to bed now, my good fellow, and try to sleep. You will be worn out if you keep this sort of thing up much longer!'

'Yes; I'll take your advice, and get into my berth. I may as well sleep now; she's sleeping under the water, and I can never do her any more good in this world. And I shall want all my strength, too, Mr Fowler; I shall want it *for what's coming!*'

He scrambled into his berth as he spoke, and the kind-hearted detective having administered a sleeping-draught to him, under the guise of a stiff glass of whisky toddy, left him to forget his troubles as best he might.





CHAPTER XI.

A CHANGE.

DURING that night a gentle breeze rippled the bosom of the ocean, and the unhealthy mist, like a death-shroud hung over the face of the living, was slowly lifted, and passed away. By morning, when long white shafts of light were appearing in the eastward, there was a clear horizon, and, better still, a fair wind. Then the clouds assumed fantastic shapes, and drifted towards the west, and a rosy hue tinted the white sky, which turned to a deep scarlet, and finally resolved itself to

a rich orange, until a majestic ball of fire shot up into the heavens, and lit the day with golden beams.

The *Pandora* was making her eight knots an hour with flowing sheets. All her sails were spread to the wind, and the sun soon dried and warmed her decks. Several other vessels were in sight—small coasters — that were making northerly courses, and occasionally a black pillar of smoke from the funnel of a steamer could be distinguished right ahead. The passengers, recovered from their despondency, had assembled with smiling faces on the poop deck.

Mr and Mrs Vansittart were present, delighted at the idea of so soon reaching *terra firma*, and resuming their life in the bush, and not less so at the prospect of getting rid of their troublesome companion. For Mr Vansittart fully coincided now with his wife's opinion concerning Godfrey Harland, and had quite made up his mind to dismiss him as soon

as ever they reached New Zealand. He would not be ungenerous, or unkind. That was not in his nature. He would recoup him liberally for his trouble and loss of time, but he would not take him up to Tabbakooloo. His behaviour with Grace, and her evident infatuation for him, would have been sufficient reason to prevent it, without the very serious suspicions that had lately attached themselves to his name. So that matter was settled, eminently to the satisfaction of Mrs Vansittart, although her husband was not equally delighted at the prospect of the task that lay before him.

Mrs Leyton, keeping one eye upon her baby and the other upon Alice and Captain Lovell, was smiling serenely at the prospect of meeting her husband, and having some one to look after her again, and Miss Vere was in the same state of joyful anticipation.

The actress had made good use of her time.

The long monotonous voyage had afforded her ample leisure for studying her new rôles, and she was looking forward with the keenest pleasure to making her *débüt* and her name in a new country, and with a new people.

Her parts suited her to perfection, her wardrobe was safe in the hold, her husband was waiting to receive her with open arms in Canterbury. What on earth could any woman want more. She looked radiant with health and happiness, as she sat in her deck chair, talking with Harold Greenwood, who generally played shadow to her substance. This young gentleman had not been so stricken by his disappointment as some people might imagine, neither had the unexpected revelation that his divinity was married had any effect in making him alter his pre-conceived determination to follow her through the New World. She could still be worshipped, even if she *were* Mrs Perkins! In fact, Mr Greenwood had not quite made

up his mind whether he might not yet cut Mr Perkins out. And Miss Vere's manner to him may have favoured the idea. She delighted in her little 'masher,' and never lost an opportunity of letting him make a fool of himself. He was her fetcher and carrier, and general 'walking-stick,' and she so often avowed that she did not know what she should have done on the voyage without him, that he quite believed himself to be indispensable to her comfort.

'Oh, *I* travel with "the company,"' he would reply to any one who asked him what were his plans on reaching New Zealand. 'You see Miss Vere couldn't very well do without me. I'm her "factotum," as she is pleased to call it. In fact,' he would continue, lowering his voice, 'I ran a very good chance once of becoming a near connection of Mr Perkins'. No, that's not it exactly,' he would say, correcting himself, with a puzzled look upon his flabby face; 'but

I *ought* to have been Mr Perkins, or I *should* have been, if there had been no Mr Perkins at all. You understand, I'm sure. It's the way of the world, but it's the sort of thing one can't talk about.'

So half the passengers thought Mr Greenwood was a very wicked and immoral young man, and the other half thought—well, they thought, and justly, that he was an ass, with something spelt with a big *D* before it. But he was none the less amusing on that account to Miss Vere, who declared that he was the sole thing that had kept her in health during the voyage.

Alice Leyton, leaning on the arm of Captain Lovell, whose engagement to her was known to the whole ship's company, walked blithely up and down the deck, bandying jests with her old lover whenever she came across him; and Mr Fowler strutted in company with Dr Lenard. Their colloquy, indeed, appeared to be of more importance than that of the

others, which was the reason, perhaps, that they conversed with lowered voices, and stopped every now and then and leaned over the side of the vessel, whilst they peered with solemn looks into each other's faces.

Godfrey Harland, who was seated upon the skylight benches, apparently shunned by everybody, did not seem to like the way in which Mr Fowler and the doctor were talking to each other, for he watched their movements and grimaces attentively, though he was very careful not to be caught doing so.

Captain Robarts, who was also on deck, seemed to have shaken off 'the black dog' that had clung to him so much of late, and actually greeted the ladies with the nearest approach he could manufacture to a smile. The wind and the weather had had a marvellous effect upon him. Three or four times during the morning he had rushed into the pilot-house and examined his precious sextant,

and brightened up its silver arc with his silk bandana. He was in exuberant spirits *for him*,—thankful beyond measure that the voyage had terminated with so few mishaps, and that his barque was within a day's sail of the land. He forgot his petty annoyances, and chatted to his first officer in quite a lively manner. He regarded his vessel with a complacent, self-satisfied air, as if she owed everything she was, or had done, to him alone. He sometimes indulged in a low chuckle to himself ; and had he not considered that he might have fallen thereby in the estimation of his passengers and crew, he might even have committed the impropriety of bursting out into song. But from this indiscretion his utter want of voice or musical ability mercifully preserved him.

But the crowning bliss was yet to come. Mr Coffin, obeying the instructions of his superior officer, officially proclaimed to the ladies and gentlemen on deck, that

the following day would bring them to the end of their voyage, and in two days' time (providing there was no quarantine) they would all be on shore.

This news was received with the greatest excitement and applause. Miss Vere set the example of clapping her hands, which was taken up by all present, and the second-class passengers, who had been listening to the first officer's harangue from the quarter-deck, burst forth, on its conclusion, into a loud cheer.

Godfrey Harland joined in it. The intelligence was, perhaps, more welcome to him than to any one there. In a day more he would be free—free from these long faces and suspicious looks—free also, he hoped, from his wife, and the scrutiny of Farrell. As he thought of Iris, he glanced down at the quarter-deck, and saw her standing there by the side of Perry, with her serious eyes strained in the direction in which they had told her the land lay. The idea flashed across

Harland's mind that it would be as well, perhaps, to speak to her as soon as he could do so without attracting notice. He had had no communication with her since *that night*. Would she not think it strange if he did not ask the reason of her not complying with his request? He waited until most of the saloon passengers had disappeared, joyfully bent on packing their boxes, and writing letters with the news of their arrival, to be despatched to the old country which they had left thousands of miles astern, as soon as they touched land. And then, with a quick look around, to see if he was observed, Godfrey Harland descended the companion, and made his way to the side of his wife. Will Farrell was below at the time, and Perry had walked away before Harland appeared. There was no one near enough to overhear their conversation.

‘Iris,’ he commenced (but do what he would, he could not help his voice shak-

ing), 'did you receive my letter the other night?'

'I did,' she answered, without looking at him.

'Why did you not meet me then, as I asked you to do, in the spare galley?'

'You know the reason well. Poor Maggie came to meet you, instead of me.'

'*Maggie!*' exclaimed Godfrey, with a well-feigned start of surprise, '*Maggie!* Was it in coming after *me* that the poor girl met her death? This is terrible news! It was a great shock to me when I heard *who* was missing. Why did you not tell me she was on board?'

'I did not see the necessity.'

'Of course I could have no idea she would cross the sea with you: it was so unlikely. What could have been her motive in doing so?'

'I do not suppose it is any concern of yours.'

'You are very cold and hard to me.'

One would think I had been doing something wrong. What is the matter? I came down with the kindest feelings, to make some arrangement with you about landing to-morrow. We cannot go together, but I must not lose sight of you. I cannot quite decide what is best to be done.'

'Spare yourself the trouble, Godfrey; I do not intend to go with you.'

'Who do you go with, then?'

'That is *my* business. But I will never live with *you* again, rest assured of that.'

This determination, so different from what Iris had expressed before, when she had threatened to compel him to acknowledge and support her, filled Harland with terror. There was evidently some deep feeling at work, to have made her alter her mind so soon, and speak so boldly to him. Was it possible she *knew* how Maggie Greet had come by her death, and was resolved to expose him? What else could imbue her with this sudden inde-

pendence and hardihood? As he thought of it, his knees knocked together with fright. But he tried to brave it out.

‘I can’t understand your tactics, Iris. Last time we met, you told me that if I would give you my written word to live soberly for the future, everything should be right between us. Well, I am ready to give you my promise to that effect. I wrote you that letter with the idea of making up our quarrel, and I have hardly spoken to Miss Vansittart since. Indeed she is quite angry with me for my want of courtesy. And now you appear to have changed your mind. What is the reason?’

‘I don’t see that there is any need to give it you, and I am quite sure you would not like to hear it if I did. But I am quite resolved not to owe anything to you for the future. I will neither live with you, nor take any maintenance from you. I would rather starve, a great deal. And now you know my determination, please

not to speak to me again, or you may drive me to do something for which we may both be sorry.'

Godfrey Harland understood her now. He saw plainly that she *suspected*, though it was impossible that she should *know*. Still—if he aggravated her into giving vent to her suspicions—it might be very awkward for him. Conciliation all round was the only card left for him to play.

'You have got some fancied grudge against me, Iris, I suppose, though I can't for the life of me imagine *what*.'

'If *I* imagine it, it is sufficient for my purpose.'

'True. But I am sorry. I had dreamt we might turn over a new leaf in the new country, and become a model married couple.'

'No. That will never be—*now*,' she said significantly.

'You understand plainly that my little flirtation with Miss Vansittart is completely over, don't you?'

‘Yes.’

‘And that my income is to commence at six hundred a year.’

‘Yes.’

‘And I am willing to remit you half of it, until I can disclose our marriage to Mr Vansittart?’

‘Yes.’

‘And yet you refuse to live with me,—you give me up altogether, at the very moment when I have the opportunity to keep you in a comfortable home.’

‘I do. I refuse to have anything whatever to do with you, from this hour to the last day of my life.’

‘Have you confided your intention to any one else?’

‘To no one.’

He drew closer to her, and whispered nervously,—

‘Iris—if—if—you have taken any absurd notions into your head, which have not the slightest foundation—you—you won’t ruin me, will you? You won’t go

and make them public property, so as to cast an unmerited stigma upon me, and spoil all my future prospects ?’

Then she turned her pale face towards him, and he read the truth in her eyes.

‘You have no cause to fear me,’ she answered contemptuously. ‘You will never be betrayed by *me*. But—it must depend on the condition that you never claim me as your wife, nor try to marry another woman. If you attempt to interfere with me, or to force me to live with you again, I shall adopt what means I can to prevent you. Understand me plainly, Godfrey Harland. You and I are parted *for ever*. I would not even stoop to take your hand, that is stained with—’

‘Hush, hush ! for God’s sake !’ he entreated ; ‘it is a mistake ; it is not true. I had nothing whatever to do with it.’

‘Say no more,’ she interposed, with a quick look of horror. ‘Every word you utter is a fresh condemnation. If you want me to be silent—if you want me to

keep my promise and my senses, you will leave me to myself, and never attempt to see me again.'


She turned from him, and by the convulsive twitching of her face he saw how difficult she found it to control herself. He made one more effort to speak, but Iris waved him from her, and feeling very uncomfortable, conscience-stricken, and alarmed, Godfrey Harland retreated to his own cabin, to consider what steps it would be wisest to take in the matter.





CHAPTER XII.

EXPOSURE.

T four bells in the early watch at the break of the ensuing day, Captain Robarts was to be seen walking in company with his chief officer. The wind had continued to blow steadily during the night, freshening a little at eight bells, and the *Pandora* had, at that time, but one hundred miles to traverse. Should the elements continue to favour them, the skipper expected to be anchored in the Bay before midnight. But the appearance of the sun, which just peeped from a cur-

tain of bright red clouds, bordered with dull orange, formed the subject of a grave discussion between the two officers.

‘I don’t like the looks of it, sir,’ said Mr Coffin, who had summoned his commander to join him in an inspection of the offending luminary; ‘and my opinion is, that we shall get it before night falls.’

‘We ought to be at anchor by the second dog watch,’ observed the captain; ‘have you noticed the barometer?’

‘Yes; and it’s falling, sir,’ replied the mate gravely. ‘Look at the lumpy sea, too. The wind is not shifting about. There is no reason why those waves should toss about in that fashion.’

‘I don’t mind the water so much,’ said Captain Robarts; ‘but those blood-red streaks about that washed-out sun look dirty. What’s she making?’

‘Eight and a-quarter when I hove the log at eight bells, sir,’ answered Mr Coffin.

‘ Let me see, then. We ought to sight the land by two. I shall go below now, and get my coffee. Don’t alter her course, but call me if there is any change. And, by - the - way, Mr Coffin, tell Mr Blythe that if he has time to do it this morning, I want the booms put into the foremast.’

And with another glance towards the east, Captain Robarts retreated to his berth.

Before the decks were washed, several of the male passengers had ascended the poop. It was the usual custom with them aboard to be called at five bells, and when six bells struck, and the decks had been well scrubbed and ‘squeegeed’ down, to make their appearance above.

On the morning in question, however, the shellbacks had not yet shipped their pumps and hose when Captain Lovell, Harold Greenwood, Mr Vansittart, and others climbed up the ladder, and beset

the mate with questions. But when the nozzle commenced to play a stream of water over their trousers, these gentlemen, whose shore rig-out (unlike the sea-boots of the ship's company) could not withstand the briny, took refuge in the little pilot-house, and, lighting their cheroots, waited till they might find a dry resting-place outside.

‘What did Mr Coffin say?’ asked Captain Lovell.

‘I couldn’t succeed in getting anything out of him,’ laughed Mr Vansittart. ‘He only muttered something about sighting land this afternoon.’

‘These sailors always like to be so confoundedly mysterious,’ remarked another. ‘Why the deuce can’t the fellow satisfy our curiosity, instead of talking in riddles? He must know perfectly well when the ship is due.’

‘Wait till Blythe comes along. *He’ll* tell us.’

‘Yes; he’s a very different build from

these uncouth bears. Vernon Blythe is a gentleman,' said Lovell ; ' but Captain Robarts doesn't know how to answer a civil question, and Mr Coffin thinks it funny to slap you in the face (metaphorically speaking) for asking it.'

' Any room inside there for a little one ? ' inquired Mr Fowler, looking in at the doorway. ' These fellows seem to enjoy throwing the water over one.'

' Yes ; come in. Good-morning. How are you ? ' said Lovell.

' Jolly, thanks. Had a capital night's rest. What's the betting on the passage now ? '

' Well, I'm afraid the odds will be longer, since the sun and barometer have conspired to damp our hopes.'

' What ; are we going to have a blow ? ' demanded Fowler.

' So the mate thinks. The skipper has been on deck too, which is unusual for him, I think. He does not, as a rule, leave his blankets so early.'

‘I noticed something queer about the sun when I was on the quarter-deck,’ said Mr Fowler. ‘I am not much of a judge of such matters, but it looked uncanny to me. By Jove! do you hear those gulls? They are uttering the most discordant screams. I expect there is something in that too.’

The voice of the first officer here broke in upon their conjectures.

‘Clew up the mizen royal,’ he shouted suddenly.

‘Hullo! it has begun already!’ exclaimed Captain Lovell; ‘let us go out on deck. They can’t haul on the ropes and drench our trousers through at the same time.’

The sun had risen clear of the horizon now, and was lighting up the seething ocean, with its watery rays. The red clouds still hung about, but their colour did not appear to be so vivid. In the westward, on the starboard bow, a dusty-looking vapour obscured everything from view. As the wind increased, the

Pandora, with flowing sheets, quickened her speed. The log then told nine and a half.

On all sides, the sea, instead of rolling in long swells, rose in the air in chops, often breaking suddenly and dispersing in rivers of white foam. The water gurgled through the crevices in the ports, and flowed back through the scuppers. After much flapping, the royals were secured and made fast to the yards, and then, the mizentop-gallant sail was stowed, which made spits bounce aboard over the after mainrail.

Several vessels were passed.

A lively little coaster, under reefed top-sails and storm staysail, and a big smoke-jack, breasting the sea, steaming in the very teeth of the wind, dipping her bows frequently, and ladling up large seas upon her top-gallant fore-castle, that made the 'look-out' hastily lay aft, and take up his responsible position on the bridge.

But the *Pandora* had the best of it.

She was before the wind, and all her square canvas was drawing to advantage. Little was eaten at the breakfast table that day. Excitement chased away hunger, and the ladies emerged from their berths, warmly wrapped in hats and cloaks, and after swallowing a few hasty morsels, went on deck to aid in keeping a good look-out. A hundred times the binoculars and spy-glasses were levelled towards the land, and on each occasion the eager questioners received an answer in the negative.

Two people alone on board ship appeared indifferent to their whereabouts, and refused to sympathise with the animal spirits and glad anticipations of the passengers. These were the captain of the vessel, and his chief officer, who regarded the signs of the weather as far more important and interesting than the proximity of land. At noon, the main-top-gallant sail was taken off her, and she then rolled heavily. Large seas thumped over by the main chains, making the

gangway exceedingly difficult to traverse without receiving a shower bath.

The increased violence of the wind did not hasten the speed of the *Pandora*, and it was not till four o'clock in the afternoon, when the passengers had become weary of looking out for it, that a dark line in the horizon, looming through the surrounding mist, intimated that they were at last in sight of land.

'That's it, sure enough, sir,' remarked Mr Coffin. 'Those ugly crags mark the entrance to the bay. But I don't think we shall get anchorage to-night.'

'Nonsense! we are not thirty miles off,' replied the captain.

'But the wind is increasing, sir,' argued the mate, 'and we sha'n't get a pilot. So how about anchorage?'

'Plenty of good anchorage there, Mr Coffin. I shall run in this evening and bring up under the cliffs. We shall be under the hills by ten o'clock.

'Yes, sir; but I've known it to blow

stiffer when it comes down between those hills than when outside.'

To this remark Captain Robarts gave no answer but a grunt.

'Are the anchors over the bows?' he asked presently.

'Yes, sir; we got them over in yesterday's dog watch.'

'See your cable ranged on deck clear for running, and tell the carpenter to look to his windlass,' and turning aft, the captain went to alter her course.

'Land, ho!' shouted the man on the look-out, which made the passengers jump from their seats, and rush to the side.

'Ay, ay,' replied Captain Robarts indifferently.

'Let her go off a point,' he continued, speaking to the helmsman, and having satisfied himself that the vessel was on her right road, he turned away to avoid any questions that might be put to him.

As soon as that longed-for cry had been sung out, everybody was naturally eager to discern the promised land.

‘But I can’t see *anything*!’ exclaimed Alice Leyton. ‘I wish Jack was here; I am sure there must be something wrong with these glasses.’

‘I expect it requires a practised eye,’ said Captain Lovell. ‘By Jove! though, I can make out a headland over there. Can’t you see a grey peak?’

‘I *think* I can,’ replied Alice, but her tone was too doubtful to be relied on.

But in the course of another hour, when two bells had been sounded in the dog watch, the tall rugged form was distinctly visible, with its rough beetling crags majestically facing the ocean, but the foot was not apparent. There was a thick pearly mist on the face of the water, that hid the breakers that dashed with such fury against the rocks from view, and allowed only the summit of the land to be seen.

Will Farrell paced the quarter-deck, burning with thoughts of revenge. He longed to confront his enemy Harland, and prove him to be the murderer of the woman he had loved, and yet he dared not disobey the orders of the detective.

‘Yet what if he should escape?’ he thought to himself, as his hands nervously grasped the lappels of his coat. ‘Here we are within sight of land, and the villain is cunning enough for anything. Once let him get on shore, and neither Mark Rendle nor I will ever see him again. He will hide like a fox. Surely the passengers ought to share our knowledge and suspicions, that there may be the less chance of his getting off scot free. He has done it once. Why should he not do it again? Yet, if I should ruin all my chances of revenge! What *shall* I do?’

Almost as he thought thus, Godfrey Harland appeared before him. He had

been considerably upset by Iris's reception of him the day before. Her look and manner and speech had so palpably conveyed to him the truth that she suspected him of having had a share in the death of Maggie Greet. And if *she* suspected it, perhaps Farrell did so too. And yet of what avail were their suspicions, when they could not possibly have any proofs, and would not dare to speak without them? Even the doctor's careful examination of the body had resulted (as Harland had taken good care to ascertain) in his being unable to detect any signs of violence. And now she was hidden from sight for evermore—buried in the unfathomable depths of the sea, and no one had the right to call her accidental death by any other name. At the same time, he had decided it would be advisable to conciliate Farrell, if possible, before going on shore, so as to prevent his tongue wagging more than was agreeable when he got there. And to that intent Harland now ap-

proached his enemy, with a pleasant smile and an outstretched palm. He could not have chosen a more unfavourable moment for making his overtures of peace.

‘How are you, old man?’ he commenced airily, as he proffered his hand. ‘Here we are, you see, at the end of our journey, and to-morrow we shall part, perhaps for ever.’

‘What do you mean by speaking to me?’ demanded Farrell, glaring at him.

‘*Mean!* Why, that I want to part friends with you. Come along, and have a drink.’

‘*Have a drink!*’ replied Farrell, dashing the offered hand to the ground. ‘Do you imagine that *I* would drink with *you*?’

‘And why not?’ said Harland, determined to brave it out. ‘What harm have *I* done you? Surely you are not going to harbour that old grudge against me for ever. Come, man, try to forget and forgive. If ever it is in my power, I’ll make it up to you—upon my soul I will; but

just at present I expect I'm as poor as yourself.'

'*Make it up to me!*' cried Farrell fiercely. 'Can you give me back the character you took away, or restore the woman who was to have been my wife?'

At that allusion Harland grew ashy pale; for Farrell spoke so loud that the whole ship might have heard him.

'Hold your tongue, you young fool!' he exclaimed. 'You don't know what you're talking about. I had no more to do with the girl's death than you had yourself. What's the use of talking such nonsense, just because we had a bit of a tiff over our play? Make it up like a sensible man, and have a drink over it.'

'Stand off!' thundered Farrell; 'don't dare to approach me, or it will be the worse for you.'

'What do you mean? Are you drunk, or mad?'

'Whichever you please; but if you don't go at once it will be the worse for you.'

Harland would have gone as desired, had not Bob Perry appeared at that moment upon the scene.

‘Hullo, Farrell!’ he cried, ‘what’s up?’

‘This scoundrel dares to ask me to drink with him,’ replied Will hotly.

‘And, pray, what harm is there in that?’ asked Harland *nonchalantly*.

His manner irritated Farrell beyond endurance.

‘Do you presume to ask me?’ he cried. ‘Do you wish me to carry out my threat, and expose you to the whole ship?’

‘You *dare* not!’ hissed Harland in his ear; ‘you have not a single proof to bring forward to support your lies; whilst *I* should ask you before them all how much you know of the disappearance of your leman over the ship’s side the other night.’

‘*Liar!*’ exclaimed Will Farrell, flying at his throat, and in another minute the two men were rolling on the deck together, locked in a furious embrace. Perry called

for help, and every one on deck was soon witnessing the struggle. Again and again did the combatants spring up and fly afresh at each other, but at last the screams of the women and the expostulations of the men seemed to rouse them to some sense of their disgraceful position, and, bruised and bleeding, they allowed themselves to be separated. Harland was much the more severely punished of the two, and seemed almost fainting, as he was supported between Dr Lennard and Captain Lovell; but Farrell, pinioned in the strong arms of Vernon Blythe, was quite ready to go on with the fight, and it demanded all the strength of the young officer to prevent his flying at his enemy again.





CHAPTER XIII.

A LEE SHORE.

‘**T**HIS is disgraceful, gentlemen!’ exclaimed Dr Lennard; ‘and I am surprised at your so forgetting yourselves. If you do not cease fighting at once, you will compel me to call in the authority of the captain.’

‘Let me go,’ panted Farrell, as he struggled in the detaining grasp of Jack Blythe; ‘let me finish the brute whilst I can! He is a forger and a murderer. He is not fit to live.’

‘*He lies,*’ murmured Harland, faint with loss of blood. ‘He is mad; don’t listen to him.’

But every one was listening. The saloon passengers hung over the fiferail, the stewards appeared in the cabin passage, the shellbacks gathered in a group at the main rigging, and the rest were clustered upon every side.

‘It is the truth!’ gasped Farrell. He has defied and insulted me, and I will expose him.’

‘Don’t let him speak,’ said Harland, shaking with fear.

‘Yes, yes! let us hear him,’ interposed the second-class passengers.

‘Ay, ay, let the lad have fair play!’ exclaimed a veteran shellback.

‘I will tell you about the murder,’ continued Farrell, choking with excitement and fury.

‘*The murder!*’ echoed a dozen voices. But at that moment Mr Fowler pushed his way through the crowd, and caught hold of Will Farrell.

‘Stop, man, for Heaven’s sake!’ he cried.

‘No, no ; you shall not stop me,’ replied Farrell, wrenching himself out of his grasp. ‘My blood is up, and everybody shall know the truth of it.’

‘I warn you—’ continued the detective.

‘The time is past for warning,’ said the unhappy Farrell ; ‘all I want is my revenge.’

‘Let us hear him. It’s only fair that he should be allowed to speak!’ exclaimed the crowd.

‘That man, who calls himself Godfrey Harland, is Horace Cain, the forger of Starling’s cheque, who escaped to America, and came back under an assumed name.’

Harland’s white lips moved to refute the assertion, but no sound came from them.

‘He is the husband of the lady who calls herself Miss Douglas, and whom he deserted and left (as he thought) in England ; and the girl — the poor girl,’ continued Farrell, in a choking voice, ‘as came by her death the other night, and as was to have been my wife, went up at that

very hour to meet him, and show him the proofs I hold against him for forgery. What do you say to that?’

‘*Where* are your proofs?’ gasped Harland, to whom terror seemed to have restored his speech. ‘I don’t know Miss Douglas, or the other woman. I never spoke to either of them. You must mistake me for some other man.’

‘No, he don’t,’ interposed a sailor, ‘for you met Miss Douglas when she was in the spare galley along with me, sir, and you knew her, and called her by her name as soon as you clapped eyes on her!’

‘Can you swear to that?’ asked the detective.

‘*I* can swear to it,’ replied Iris, suddenly appearing in their midst, ‘for I am his wife, Iris Harland.’

At this announcement, Grace Vansittart gave a slight scream, and fell into the arms of her mother.

‘It is for *her* sake, not my own, that

I have said this,' continued Iris; 'and of all the rest, *I know nothing.*'

She swayed forward here, as though she were about to fall, and Vernon Blythe flew to her side and threw his arm around her.

'Courage,' he said, in a low voice, and as he spoke she seemed to revive, like a flower when the skies are opened.

'But who can speak to Mr Harland's having met Miss Greet on the evening she fell overboard?' demanded a voice from the crowd.

'*I* know that when she was found she wore Miss Douglas's cloak, which she had taken from her cabin after she was asleep,' said a steward.

'And I—' interposed Dr Lennard, 'that on that evening, as I left the dinner-table, I found Mr Harland in my surgery, who told me he had dropped the end of a cigar there. The same night, at about eleven o'clock, Captain Lovell and I found him alone by the mainrail, and asked

him to accompany us to the smoke-room, which was immediately pervaded by a strong smell of chloroform, proceeding from his pocket-handkerchief. The next morning I discovered one of my bottles of chloroform was missing.

‘I—I—told you—I had the toothache,’ said Harland, with chattering teeth.

‘So you are the hero of the Starling forgery case, Mr Harland. You made a plucky bolt of it, and though I have been on the lookout for you several times since, I little thought to find you so many miles from home. Without a warrant, my power is at present useless, but I must detain you from going on shore, on the charges of forgery and—suspected murder!’

‘Can I—can I—go to my cabin?’ gasped Harland, who felt that every eye—that of Miss Vansittart included—was on him.

‘Certainly; it is better you should do so,’ replied Mr Fowler; ‘and I will see

you are not disturbed nor molested in any way.'

The unhappy man shambled off, eager only to hide himself from the scrutiny of his companions, and the company on the quarter-deck broke up.

'So you are a detective?' said Captain Lovell to Mr Fowler.

'Yes, sir. It is useless to keep up the deception any longer. As soon as I arrive at Lyttleton, I shall return by the first mail to London. You little suspected you had an official on board, but as matters have turned out, it is as well that I was here.'

'And why are you going to New Zealand?'

'That I must not tell you, but you may be sure it is not for pleasure. Allow me to hand you my card.'

'*Mark Rendle!*' exclaimed Captain Lovell; 'the hero of the International forgeries! I am proud to know you,' extending his hand. 'Had you only

thrown off your disguise, how you might have amused us during the voyage.'

'Possibly; but I had my duty to think of, and had I permitted pleasure to interfere with it, this little game, for one, would have been spoiled. But as it is blowing hard, I will go below and get my overcoat. The one I feel for most in this business is poor Miss Vansittart. There is no doubt this rascal has been passing himself off on her as a single man. How will she bear the shock?'

'Better than you think, I imagine,' replied Captain Lovell. 'She is not a young woman of very deep feelings, and her vanity will be more hurt than anything else. Will you join me in a glass of whisky?'

And Mr Mark Rendle having assented, the two men strolled together to the bar.

It was then past seven o'clock, and the shades of night had hidden the land. The fog also made it very thick ahead,

so that the entrance to the bay could not be distinguished.

The wind howled and wailed with piercing accents through the rigging, the sea was very high, and boiling torrents of foam hissed around the *Pandora*. The mainsail and crossjack were both safely rolled up, and the vessel began to labour heavily in the turbulent sea.

Long, grey clouds sailed across the sky, making the moon appear as though she were travelling at an enormous speed.

For two hours more the good ship stood on, and then the wind was blowing a strong gale. Captain Robarts was getting very uneasy. He was not certain if he was steering straight for the mouth of the bay, and it was too late for him to turn back.

The truth is, he was close to a very dangerous lee shore. Mr Coffin and Mr Blythe stood together by the rigging trying to peer through the mist, whilst Mr Sparkes, with two seamen, was on the

look-out. Half-an-hour afterwards, a voice sung out 'Land ho! on the port beam, sir!' The *Pandora* had entered the bay.

'Lower away the topsail halliards,' ordered the captain. 'Stand by your port anchor, Mr Coffin.'

'Land right ahead!' shouted the voice from the fore-castle.

'What's that?' yelled the skipper. 'Hard a-port with your helm, man!—over with it!'

There was a sudden movement made by a few of the passengers toward the wheel, the vessel answered her helm, and paid off; but Captain Robarts had miscalculated his position. A moment afterwards there was an ugly, grating noise, that seemed to scrape the ship's keel fore and aft,—a sudden lurch,—a tremendous crash, and the *Pandora*, with her fore and maintop-gallant masts and jibboom carried away—a pitiful, miserable wreck—heeled over, with the sharp-

pointed, cruel rocks deeply imbedded in her side.

Before any one on board was fully aware of their perilous situation, a monstrous sea washed over her deck, carrying the first officer, Mr Coffin, and several sailors away before it, and half-filling the cabin, followed by others that leapt over at the fore and main chains. In a moment all was confusion. Vernon Blythe was witness to the disappearance of the mate, and immediately took command in his stead.

‘Man the starboard lifeboat!’ he ordered, in a firm, loud voice.

All realised the meaning of those terrible words. The women shrieked and clung to each other, whilst their faces blanched with mortal fear. With clenched teeth, and eyes staring into vacancy, they tried to pray, but only succeeded in wringing their hands in despair. The furious seas that were clearing the ship's main deck—the wild confusion on board—the warring

of the elements as they thrashed and battled against the precipitous cliffs—resounding in the chasms with the noise of thunder, and retreating only to charge again ; the hoarse cries of the sea birds, and the thought of their close proximity to Death, appalled them beyond description.

The men stood bewildered, clutching at the rails, and watching the agonised frenzy of the weaker sex without offering them any comfort or assistance. They were unnerved themselves, and showed their terror by their scared and expressionless faces, trembling limbs, and speechless tongues.

Vernon Blythe was busily employed on the skids, cheering on the sailors, and superintending the lowering of the life-boat. His face was very white and strained, but his hands were steady ; and of all there, young or old, he was the most courageous and self-possessed. He had no leisure to think of the sad fate of his chief officer, poor Abel Coffin, who, with

five sturdy shellbacks, had been swept from his side into the boiling deep. He dared not even think of Iris Harland, though every effort he made seemed to be done for her, and her alone. He was conscious of only one thing,—that, in that fearful hour, he stood alone, responsible for the actions of the sailors, and the safety of their living freight. He stood there, calm and collected, taking no heed of the confusion by which he was surrounded. His lip quivered a little, and a drop of blood, which he had drawn with his closed teeth, trickled slowly on to his chin. But his orders were given in a clear, authoritative voice—slowly and deliberately, and without the least sign of fear. The seamen noticed his cool courage, and it urged them on to redouble their efforts, and fight against the raging storm. Vernon Blythe, young as he was, to assume such a command, taught them a lesson that night which those who survived it never forgot. He

showed them the value of self-control in a time of danger, and what a pitiable creature the man without it can prove himself to be.

That man, strange to say, was the very one who should have been to the front in everything—the commander of the vessel, Captain Robarts. There he stood, next to Jack Blythe, with a face of ashen paleness, a trembling frame, chattering teeth, that rattled like castanets against each other, wild, haggard looks, and a total inability to supply his young officer's place. When the man was most wanted to show an example of courage and trust in God—when he should have taken the sole command of his ship's company, and lived or died with them—his despicable cowardice completely unsexed him, and he might have been the smallest cabin-boy on board, for the picture of abject terror he displayed.

When the tempest arose, and the wrath of Heaven seemed poured out upon them,

and that beautiful axiom of George Herbert's—'He that will learn to pray, let him go to sea'—appeared most applicable, then Captain Robarts forgot his Creator, his position, and his duty.





CHAPTER XIV.

SHIPWRECKED.

IN the midst of this terrible confusion, the starboard lifeboat of the *Pandora* was taken from her chocks, and swung into the davit tackles. Six sailors jumped quickly into her, and took their places on the thwarts, and the third officer, Mr Sparkes, grasped the tiller in the stern sheets. Then the women, with tear-stained faces and dishevelled hair, were handed down, some moaning piteously with fright, others murmuring prayers to Heaven for help,

and clinging to their companions in their distress. The first to enter the boat was Grace Vansittart, wailing louder than the rest, and covering her face with her hands to shut out the terrifying scene around her. Her usually blooming face was white as marble, and her large brown eyes seemed to be starting from their sockets. But her grief was all for herself. No thought, in that awful hour, of the wretched man to whom she had been vowing protestations of fidelity throughout the voyage occupied her mind. She was too much alarmed on her own account to remember anybody else. Father, mother, and lover had alike sunk into insignificance beside the danger that threatened herself. There was no doubt but that, should Miss Vansittart survive the wreck, she would soon enough be comforted for the loss of Godfrey Harland. Mr and Mrs Vansittart were the next to follow.

The old man had wished to remain

behind, but his wife had clung to him with so tenacious a grasp, that Vernon Blythe pushed them both in together.

‘John! John!’ the poor woman had exclaimed; ‘we have lived together for thirty years! Don’t let us die apart!’

And after all, as Vernon in the pride of his young manhood thought, what was an old man but a woman!

Mrs Leyton followed with Alice, but not before they had both turned round and given him a farewell kiss.

‘God bless you, dear boy,’ sobbed the mother, ‘for all you have done for me and mine.’

‘Oh! Jack, Jack!’ cried Alice, ‘I have never left off loving you! How I wish—’

‘All right, dear Mrs Leyton. All right, Alice,’ he replied cheerily. ‘Keep up your spirits! We shall meet again before long,’ and so passed them into the boat.

‘Oh, Jack! come with me!’ screamed

Alice, as she found herself rocking on the deep, but the wind prevented her voice from reaching his ear, as he busied himself with handing the baby into the arms of the shellbacks.

Poor little Winnie was as sorely frightened as the rest, and loud in her lamentations. Then came Miss Vere, pale as a piece of Parian, but calm and collected; and when her full complement was made up, the lugger-rigged craft was pushed off, and headed for the harbour.

The remaining hands then cut away the lashings of the forward jolly-boat, while others shipped the stanchions and rigged tackles. The male passengers had partly recovered from their scare by this time, and followed the good example of Vernon Blythe and the seamen, in trying to launch the second boat. It was a very dangerous task. The seas had smashed up the smoke-room as if it had been so much match-

wood, ripped up the main fiferail, and torn away the after end of the house amidships. The after companion-ladder had also been swept away, and the cabin could not be entered from the quarter-deck.

The port boats were stove in, and innumerable planks, sea-chests, buckets, and blocks, were washing about the deck, making an incessant clatter that was audible even above the howling of the gale.

Captain Robarts stood upon the poop, his agonised and distorted face the very picture of despair. One cannot judge of a sailor's qualities until he is seen under circumstances of difficulty or danger. Then his noblest or his weakest points alike stand out in bold relief. A sailor may traverse the ocean for years, and never fall in with a mishap. It is easy sailing to steer a craft in fine weather, with plenty of sea room. But a heavy blow in the Channel, with land on either

side, and a forest of shipping to keep clear of,—or a stiff breeze and a lee shore, with an untrustworthy vessel—these are the dangers which the mariner has to look out for, and which will prove him a man to be either esteemed or despised.

Standing by Captain Robarts' side, with an excited look in her eye, but no fear upon her face, was Iris Harland—the only woman left upon the sinking ship. She had watched all the others depart, she had even made a feint of following them, but, after all, had kept intentionally in the background, and let the lifeboat go without her. But few knew that she remained behind. Vernon Blythe fully believed she was on her way to land. His first thought and inquiry had been for her, and one of the sailors had told him she was lowered into the boat. And so he had returned to his duty, with his mind at ease as far as Iris was concerned. Yet she stood by

the skipper's side, watching his gallant efforts to save the remainder of the passengers and crew—proud to think that (after a fashion) he belonged to her, and resolved to stay by his side to the very last, and die with him, if it was ordained that he should die.

These two standing together—the old experienced man, and the young untried woman—were the exponents of a rule which has but few exceptions,—that love is strong as death. *She*, who was regarded as the weaker vessel, made strong by reason of her love, stood calm and courageous in the midst of danger and the sight of dissolution ; whilst *he*, who had but himself and his own credit to consider, caved in like a coward under a responsibility too heavy for him.

The jolly-boat was launched, and a dozen passengers essayed to enter her at once, pushing each other down in their effort to be first, thinking only of

their own safety, and not caring a rush for that of their neighbours.

One man, however, looked round before he jumped into the boat, and catching sight of Iris Harland on the poop, elbowed his way towards her with an exclamation of horror. It was Will Farrell.

‘Miss Douglas!’ he cried excitedly, ‘why are you still here? Come! come! before it is too late.’

But Iris did not stir.

‘Save yourself, Mr Farrell,’ she replied; ‘I shall remain behind until—until the last.’

‘What! to court death? Don’t you know that before long the vessel must be broken up,—that every moment may be your last? Miss Douglas, for my sake—for Maggie’s sake—come with me.’

‘Do you think I have so much to live for that I should fear death?’ she answered, smiling. ‘Pray, Mr Farrell, don’t waste time over me. I do not intend to leave until the last boat goes.’

‘But there may not be another. Every minute renders it more difficult to launch a boat.’

‘Then I shall die here,’ said Iris, with her soft eyes following every movement of Vernon’s form.

‘You have lost your senses. Do you realise what you are saying? Mr Blythe,’ shouted Farrell lustily, ‘*make* Miss Douglas come in the boat with us.’

In a moment he was by her side, trembling for her safety, when he had never trembled for his own.

‘Oh, Iris, how is this? I thought you were in the lifeboat. How came you to be left behind?’

‘I stayed of my own free will, Vernie,’ she said sweetly; ‘I stayed to be *with you*. Don’t deny me this poor privilege. We cannot live together, but if we are to die, oh! let me die by your side.’

‘*My darling!*’ he exclaimed; ‘I will guard your life with my own!’

‘Oh, Mr Blythe,’ said Farrell, ‘don’t

let her throw that life away. Persuade her—command her, to leave the vessel. You *know* it cannot live much longer in this sea.'

'I know that our lives are in the hands of God,' returned the young sailor simply, 'and that there is as good a chance for the next boat as for this. If Mrs Harland prefers to remain with me, I shall not prevent her from doing so.'

'Then God help you both. I must go, or they will start without me;' and without another word Will Farrell ran off to take his place in the jolly-boat. As it pushed off, he found himself sitting next to Godfrey Harland. The men glared at one another like savage beasts, but fear for themselves had swallowed up for the time being even their desire for revenge. Only one boat now remained that could be called seaworthy, and that was the cutter—for the captain's gig could not have lived in such a storm—and all hands rushed towards the mainmast, and climbed

up by the crossjack braces, and along the mizen stay, towards the frail craft.

By the aid of the bridge, Vernon Blythe clambered again upon the poop, where Iris was now standing alone, the captain having staggered to the other side of the vessel, so paralysed by the scene before him as to be unable apparently either to act or think.

‘Iris,’ exclaimed Vernon, as he took her in his arms for one mad moment, ‘Iris, my own darling! you have risked your life to stay with me.’

But words failed him. His heart beat high with joy, although the murderous waves were leaping around them, as though they longed to lick them both down together to a cruel death. The warm tears filled his yearning eyes, and a strange choking sensation assailed his powers of speech. After an effort at self-control, he resumed, hastily and authoritatively,—

‘Come, dearest! this is the last boat,

and you must be the first to enter her. Hold your shawl closely over you, and I will see you lowered into it.'

'But, Vernie, *you* will come, too?' she asked anxiously.

'I will come too. I will follow you. *I promise it,*' he said.

Then he clasped her closely to him, and pressed a passionate kiss upon her quivering lips, before he turned to superintend the lowering of the cutter. With hatchets and sheath-knives the lashings were soon hacked through, and with the maintopmast staysail halliards, they swung her from her beds, and rove the patent lowering gear.

When Iris and the few men left on the fast-sinking *Pandora* were safely aboard, Vernon Blythe went to find the captain, and entreat him to accompany them. Nothing more could be done for the ill-fated vessel, and it was folly to throw away life without reason. But on reaching the hatch, he was startled by

hearing the report of a pistol, followed by a heavy fall, and running to the foot of the mizenmast, he discovered the body of his unfortunate commander, shot through the heart. The wretched man, not daring to meet his employers, with the brand of shame and failure on his brow, knowing well that all the blame for the loss of the *Pandora* would be laid upon his shoulders, that his certificate would be suspended, and he would stand before the authorities a guilty man, had put an end to his existence. The fact is, Captain Robarts' whole soul had been wrapped up in his profession. His ship had been his wife, his children, and his home, and without her he felt he had nothing left to live for. This unexpected fatal calamity, which had dashed his brightest hopes to the ground, in the very hour of their fulfilment, had unsettled his mind, and transformed him at once into an embittered, broken-down man, who saw no refuge before him except in death.

Vernon Blythe knelt down by the side of his expiring commander, and, raising his head upon his arm, caught his last faint orders.

‘*Here—here—in her.*’

What did he mean? Did he wish to be buried with his ship?

‘In the *Pandora*, sir?’ he asked. ‘Am I to leave you here?’

The dying man’s eyes opened with a last gleam of intelligence, and then closed for ever.

There was no time to lose.

Dragging the now lifeless form to the pilot-house, Vernon Blythe laid it on the spare bunk, and murmuring the prayer, ‘God have mercy on him,’ covered the corpse with the house flag of the vessel, which he took from the locker, and hastily closing the door, left the dead sailor in his desired resting-place.

As he jumped into the cutter, the men, weary and dispirited as they had become,

received their gallant young officer with a cheer. But Vernon only thought of one thing—that Iris was safe, and, for the time being, they were *together*.





CHAPTER XV.

FARRELL'S REVENGE.

ONCE clear of the sinking vessel, and the spars that floated about her stern, the cutter went prosperously on her way, but the jolly boat had not been so fortunate. Overladen by the rush of excited passengers who crowded into her, she had but small chance in such a gale, and when she was some little distance from the *Pandora*, a huge wave took her suddenly on the wrong quarter, and she capsized with all her living freight into the sea. In the dark, with the boisterous water knocking the breath out of their bodies, what chance had the unhappy pas-

sengers of saving themselves. Indeed, the immersion was so sudden and unexpected, and they had been so thoroughly unnerved before it occurred, that the majority of them were sucked under, almost before they knew that they were drowning.

But when the *Pandora* ran upon the scarp of rocks at the north-east side of the bay, her fore-topgallant mast had gone over the side. The sea had soon carried it away from the vessel, and when the luckless jolly-boat capsized, it proved a harbour of refuge for three men. After a brief struggle, one of them, a sailor, by name Jack Andy, managed to grasp a rope, and pull himself towards the spar, which he hugged with a grip of iron till he had recovered his breath, then perceiving a shipmate in distress, who was attempting to reach it also, he tossed him a line, and dragged Will Farrell from a watery grave.

Slowly the mast drifted towards the land, sometimes immersing the men under the

huge rollers, then bringing them up again, only to prepare for another breathless dive.

‘God help the rest of ’em,’ observed Jack Andy, in one of these short intervals, ‘for if ever *we* get to shore, *they* won’t, that’s certain. They’re all in kingdom come by this time.’

‘They’re just as well there as here,’ replied Farrell, with teeth chattering from the cold. ‘Hullo! here’s one of them, though.’

The moon had just beamed upon the water, and by her white light, he could discern the features of a man who, though greatly exhausted, was clinging to the heel end of the spar.

It was Godfrey Harland.

As Farrell recognised him, the anxiety for his own preservation seemed entirely to disappear, and a cruel, vindictive spirit pervaded his countenance. With the utmost difficulty, he sidled along the mast until he faced his enemy.

‘Now, *Horace Cain!*’ he exclaimed loudly, ‘we meet face to face, and my time has come at last.’

‘What would you do to me?’ cried Harland, in a voice of terror.

‘Do to you? *Kill you!* as you killed my love. Make you taste the same death you meted out to her. We have no weapons but our fast-failing strength, but we stand on fair ground.’

Like all bullies, Harland was a coward, and his last remnant of courage forsook him now.

‘Oh, God!’ he howled, ‘spare me—spare me! You are mad!’

‘I *am* mad,’ replied Farrell, ‘mad for my revenge. You have wrested from me all I cared for in this world, and laughed at the pain you caused me. You have taken away my good name,—trampled on my reputation,—killed the only woman for whom I cared. Yes, Godfrey Harland, I could not *probe* it perhaps in open court, but I *know* you to be the murderer of

Maggie Greet, and if the hangman is to be cheated of his due, the sea shall do his work for him. You have wounded my heart till the last drop of human blood has oozed from it, and changed me from a man into a devil. Life is worth nothing to me now, and I have sworn not to die until I have avenged *her* death.'

As he spoke, Farrell crept nearer and nearer to his victim, and Harland could see his long, lean fingers curling themselves in readiness to clutch his throat as he approached.

'Oh, mercy! mercy!' whined the cowering wretch. 'Farrell, I repent. I will make amends. Have mercy on me, for Heaven's sake!'

'What mercy did you show to her?' yelled Farrell. 'Doubtless my poor girl cried to you in her terror, as you cry to me, and how did you reply? You cast her into the arms of the murderous sea, as may God give me strength to cast you

now. No, no ! the fight is a fair one, and let the best man win.'

And throwing out his arm to grasp his enemy, Farrell let go of the spar, and the two men fell into the water together.

Jack Andy looked on from the other end of the floating mast in sheer amazement at the scene that passed before him. The wind was too strong to permit him to hear what they said to one another ; but as the timber to which he clung was carried each moment farther into the bay, the water became calmer, and he was enabled to keep his head clear of the rolling billows, and to watch everything that took place between his companions.

'Why, how's this mates !' he exclaimed, as he saw them relinquish their grasp of the spar ; 'hold on, whatever you do ! for we've the chance of life afore us now for the first time.'

But they were deaf to every voice but that of their own evil passions. Directly Jack Andy perceived their murderous

intentions, he edged towards them, with the idea of calling them to reason, or saving them by main force. But he was too late. Godfrey Harland was the stronger of the two, although he had been taken somewhat unawares, and as soon as he realised that Farrell was about to strangle him, he prepared with all his force to throw off his assailant.

But the younger man had fixed his nails so firmly in his throat that he prevented his using his arms with any effect, and they both disappeared beneath a heavy roller. When they rose up to the surface, they were beyond Jack Andy's reach. Harland's face had turned purple, and the whites of his eyes were staring upwards at the moon.

'*Die !*' hissed Farrell, in his own death struggle, 'die, as *she* died, and be cursed —*for ever !*'

Down they went again beneath the remorseless sea, who opened her arms so willingly to receive them, locked to-

gether in a fierce embrace of hate and revenge; and when Jack Andy looked back for the last time, he saw the two men, gripped together in death, sink down to the bottom of the deep.

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The lifeboat and the cutter both got safe to land, and Mr Blythe and Mr Sparkes, as the only two surviving officers of the ill-fated *Pandora*, were bound to return to England by the first steamer, to report the particulars of the wreck to their employers, and to stand their own trial for the loss of the vessel—a trial which resulted in so much credit to them both, for their promptitude, coolness, and courage, that they were immediately re-appointed as first and second officers of the *Hebe*, one of the finest ships in the possession of Messrs Stern & Stales.

And when Vernon Blythe was forced to leave England again, which (luckily for himself) did not take place for some months afterwards, he had to say good-

bye to his wife as well as his mother. For after that time of trial and distress, he had felt that it was equally impossible to leave Iris friendless and alone in New Zealand, or to bring her home with him, unless she were his wife. And so they had been privately married within a few days of landing, and the girl had felt as if she had exchanged earth for heaven ever since.

‘Do you know, Vernie,’ she said, as she stood by the side of her handsome young husband in the window of the Southsea cottage, on the very day he brought home the news of his appointment to the *Hebe*—‘do you know that I sometimes think I *must* have died in the wreck of the *Pandora*, and this is quite another woman who stands beside you now.’

‘I am very glad it is *not* another woman, Iris,’ he answered, as he stooped to kiss her.

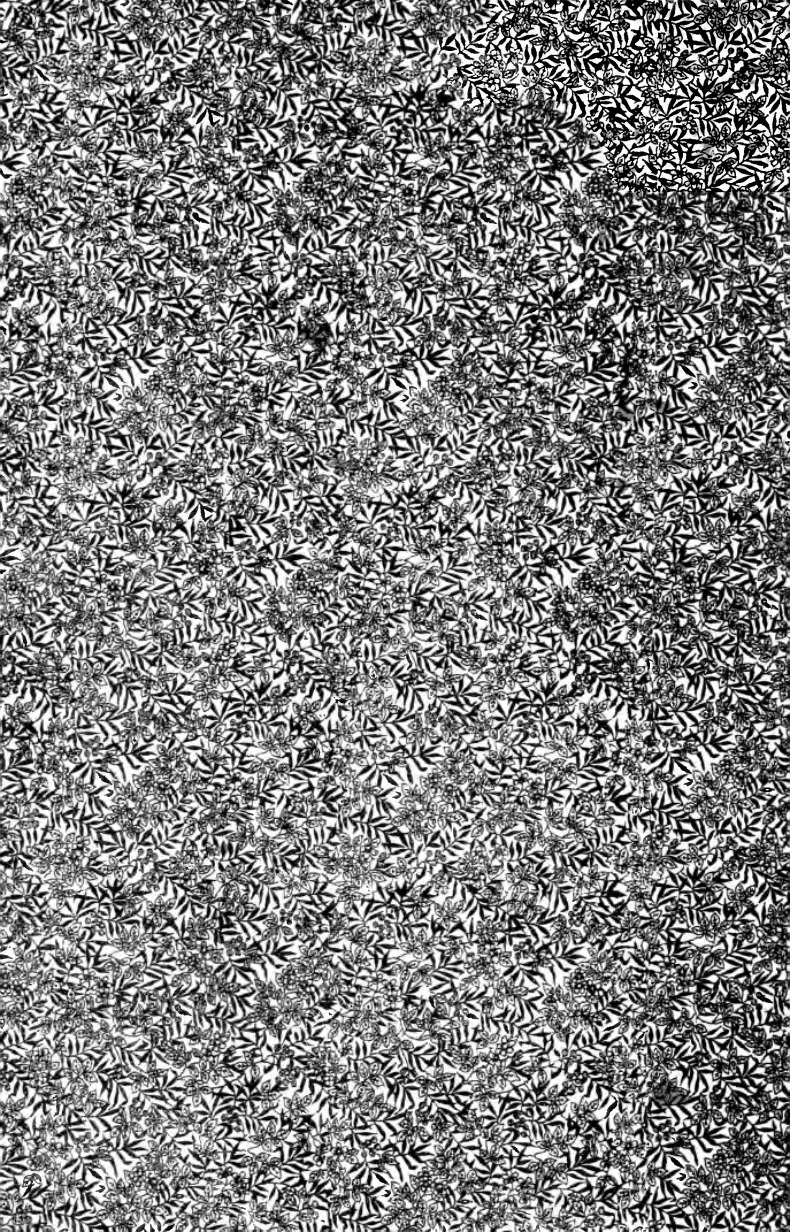
‘But the world is all so changed for me.

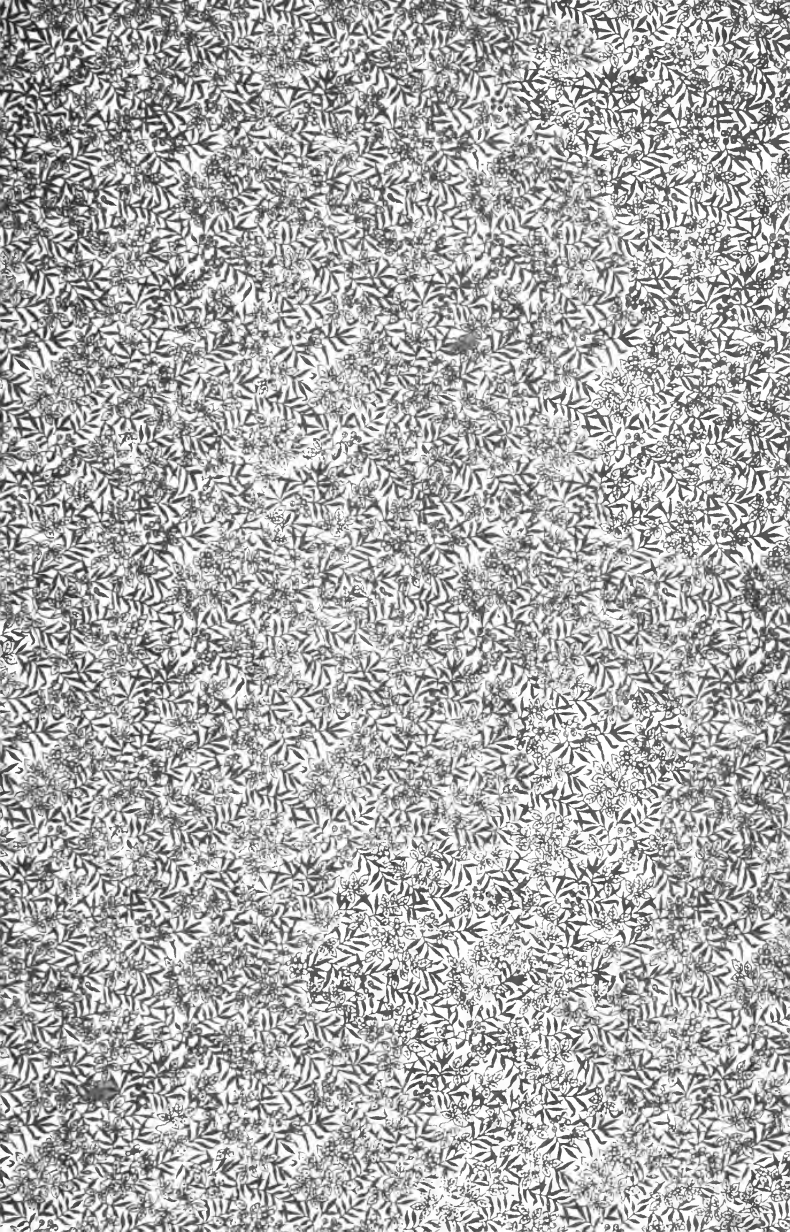
I feel as if I had passed beyond every trouble, and landed in a haven of peace. Even my sorrow at parting with you, darling,' said Iris, with her bright eyes filled with tears, 'is tempered by knowing that your dear mother loves me, and that it is a comfort both to you and her that I should be her daughter whilst you are away. But, oh, you will come back to me, Vernie!' she added, in a sudden burst of grief, 'you *will* come back to me!'

'I *will* come back to you,' he said, sweetly and solemnly, as he folded her in his arms. 'We are each other's, dearest, for life or death. Whether it be in this world or the next must be decided by a wiser love than ours, but so long as my soul exists, *I will come back to you.*'

THE END.







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